BLACK FLAG

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JJ STRIKERS; VICTORY IN SIGHT!

In this issue:

Report from visit to Garment Workers Union in Bangladesh - The Criminal Justice Act a year on - Report from Greece - Resistance against Asylum Attacks - An anarchist sexuality? - and much more

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Editorial

As someone involved in the Black Flag collective I am sometimes asked , "why bother ?" The days when Black Flag was coming out almost fortnightly and was a useful part of mobilising people for different actions (as over enthusiastically described in the last Aufheben) and carried quite up to date national and international news are long gone. Most of the comrades who were working full time to put it out are gone and financial constraints make it even more difficult. So, why bother ?

We think that there is a real need for an anarchist publication covering militant class struggle activity around the world in as accessible a way as possible. We want to promote discussion of the opportunities and problems facing revolutionary anarchism in the context of real activity (or the lack of it) rather than in academic terms and without constantly propagandising for a particular organisation. There is a lot happening in many different areas but very little discussion of how to carry struggles forward.

We can only write about things that we are involved in. We need you to send articles about whatever you are doing and think needs spreading around. Pure news may be a bit pointless if it is going to be well out of date by the time it is printed, dreary theoretical articles will be filed in the dustbin, and everything will be edited mercilessly. Photos, graphics and cartoons would be nice too.

This was to have been a nice, non-sectarian editorial about the usefulness of open debate, how we think we can push things forward, strengthening a broad anarchist movement etc. Then I saw the piece in the new Green Anarchist on why everybody who refuses to believe in Larry O'Hara as ace investigator is in the pay of Searchlight and, I thought, "why bother?".

FINANCES

DUE TO ILLNESS, THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT HAS TO BE LEFT OVER UNTIL THE NEXT ISSUE. NEEDLESS TO SAY, NEW SUBS, DONATIONS AND MONEY GENERALLY ARE ALL NEEDED AS MUCH AS EVER.

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DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE - 2nd APRIL 1996

JJ FOODS VICTORY

On October 31st 95, forty five workers at JJ Fast Food Distribution Ltd. in Tottenham were sacked for joining the T&G. The conditions at the plant were appalling; workers were putting in 60-70 hours per week for a pittance with no overtime, sick or holiday pay. Drivers were expected to pay for any parking fines or counterfeit money they were given out of their own pockets. The sacked workers immediately gathered outside the factory to form a picket and were attacked by hired thugs wielding sticks and knives. Three workers were hospitalised. Support was called for and daily pickets began to take place at dawn outside the factory. Strikers were joined by supporters from the Colin Roach Centre, Haringey Solidarity Group and various Trot organisations. Pickets were heavily policed and the TSG were present in large numbers. Pickets were kept as far from the scabs as possible by the police, who threatened to arrest anyone trying to picket the actual goods entrance. A support group was set up, and a strike bulletin produced. The heavy presence of SWP and other trot groups began to wane after the first three weeks as the strikers made it clear that they didn't want their fight turned into a glorified paper sales pitch, and the support group was left in the hands of the strikers, Haringey Solidarity Group and the Colin Roach Centre.

The official union also pulled out, as they wanted pickets in the afternoons (completely ineffective as all the workers are out on deliveries after 8am) on the grounds that dawn pickets were dangerous due to the lack of light!

The support group decided to picket JJ Foods outlets, the Jenny's Burgers chain being the main target. Jenny's is a franchise of JJ Foods and pickets were organised at a different branch each week. These were largely successful, pickets gaining surprising support from workers and even managers who were shocked by the actions of JJ's and who promised to complain to Mustafa Kamil, JJ's boss.

Support within the Kurdish and Turkish communities grew and by December Kamil was feeling the pressure and agreed to enter into negotiations with the workers.

The pickets were called off on the 11th, 12th and 13th December as a goodwill gesture while talks with ACAS took place.

Kamil turned up on the first day, saying he was happy to negotiate, but claimed his life was under threat, He had body guards with him and was wearing a bullet proof jacket! On the second day, he returned and met 40 demonstrators outside the talks. He demanded police protection and disappeared with the police.

A Union official went to the police station and managed to talk to him; he stated he was happy to re-employ the majority of sacked workers but he would need the NI numbers of all workers. However he would not take back the most active of the strikers, who just happened to be Kurdish; all those he was proposing to re-employ were Turkish.

Obviously this was not acceptable and the strikers held out for the reinstatement of all sacked workers, as well as their other demands; all workers to have contracts and be in the union; holiday pay; sick pay; no money to be paid by drivers out of their own pockets; two shifts to be introduced in the freezers where the temperature is -30° C.

Meanwhile, the strikers continued to picket and have been involved in solidarity work with the Liverpool Dockers, Hillingdon cleaners and local textile workers. They successfully pressurised Southwark and Harrow councils to cease trading with JJs.

The strikers all won their industrial tribunals in January and were found to have been unfairly dismissed. Compensation will have to be paid by Kamil, who is likely to be made bankrupt by the decision (unless he transfers his assets to Jenny's Burgers, which has been rumoured). Trade has been very slow during the strike, many scabs have left, unable to cope with the pressure of being picketed day in and day out. Delivery vans are leaving the plant half empty, and the company has been shunned by the local Turkish and Kurdish communities.

New workers support group

The strike has been largely successful against very heavy odds, and has forged links between activists from Haringey Solidarity Group, CRC and anarchist groups with Kurdish and Turkish workers and activists. Workers have agreed to put the compensation payments into a permanent workers support group for fast food and other low paid workers in the Tottenham area. Haringey Solidarity Group will be offering practical support to get the group going. Their newsletter, The Tottenham Picket, will continue. Already, the support group has helped another local victory at Jenny's Textiles (no relation!) and are mounting a unionisation campaign in the area.

Contact JJ Foods Locked Out Workers Support Group, c/o Unwaged Centre, 72 West Green Road, London N15 5NS, Tel 0181 802 9804

The Ten Thousand Mile Picket Line

For active trade unionists supporting a dispute struggling on month after month only to end in demoralisation and defeat is a familiar experience. It is one that will not apply to the 500 dockers sacked by the Mersey Dock and Harbour Company (MDHC) five months ago.

When MDHC sacked them for refusing to cross a picket line of 80 younger dockers striking for parity with the older men they picked on seasoned veterans of the class struggle.

The Transport & General Workers Union as is almost routine these days has failed to give the dispute official backing, even banning stewards from using the fax in Liverpool's Transport House after MDHC complained. But Liverpool's dockers have something more valuable than the recognition of Bill Morris or Jack Dromey - they have the serious solidarity of dock unions around the globe. Even though the bureaucratic International Transport Federation had warned its affiliates to give them a wide berth, support has flooded in to the dockers.

Dockers in Sydney have said ships will rust on the berth if the owners bring in ships bound for Liverpool. They donated £15,000, while the Maritime Union of Australia at Patrick Port Botany have decided on a $20 voluntary levy. Dockers in Drogheda have also agreed a weekly levy.

Liverpool's well-travelled dockers have given a new meaning to the term "flying picket". Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Sweden, Japan, the longest picket line ever is being spun via delegations, the internet and fax. These make great reading; the Danish Harbour Workers Union "Please accept £500"; "heartfelt expressions of solidarity accompany a bank draft of £5000" - New Zealand Seafarers Union; "I have learned about the struggle of the dock workers in Liverpool on the internet. The MDHC have stirred up great resentment amongst us" Zenkowan All Japan Dockworkers Union.

And this is working. US, Australian, Swedish and Spanish dockers are all blacking shipping to and from Liverpool. ACL, the major carrier, set MDHC a deadline of January 15th to "seek a quick solution with the union of the labour dispute at the Liverpool docks or they would be forced to use another port in the UK." That deadline has now passed and as of now (Jan 23) no ACL ships have entered the port.

ABC Containerline, a Belgian company, is also pressurising MDHC after its ships were tied up in Sydney Harbour.

In the week ending January 20th, £70m had been wiped off the stock market value of MDHC, £400,000 are being lost in profits every week.

Hitting the capitalists in the pocket is what brings them to their knees, and the negotiating table.

The main thrust of this dispute is about international direct action and solidarity and in February and international dockers' solidarity conference will be held in Liverpool to extend this action. Having said this, the British labour movement should be playing a bigger part. Liverpool trade unionists should treat Labour's entreaties not to organise city-wide industrial action with the contempt it deserves. We need to make Dockers Support Groups, and all the work that goes with it, a reality.

On 26th January, at a mass meeting in Liverpool an offer worth between £20-25,000 redundancy was unanimously rejected, as one docker said to me, "This dispute's about re-instatement, nothing else".

Anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists should prioritise support for this dispute. Indeed, if our activity isn't about supporting a tenacious unofficial dispute what is it about?

Manchester Solidarity federation have sent out an appeal to the International Workers Association, the syndicalist international.

Syndicalists active in Hull Trades Council organised a visit to Sweden for two dockers with the Swedish Syndicalist union (SAC) and the independent dockers union. This resulted in total blacking of Liverpool shipping and some £10,000 in donations. SAC created Liverpool docks support groups and the respect and liking between the dockers and the syndicalists grows.

A syndicalist based in Glasgow organised a visit to the Coordinadora, the independent Spanish dockers union whose HQ is in the Canaries. Again, the Spanish unions decided to black Liverpool traffic.

At home, we should be helping to create Liverpool dockers support groups either as independent groups or allied to trades councils. For more info, telephone the Liverpool dockers on 0151-207 3388

WARNING!
SPIES FOR PEACE

In the Pottle-Randle case, two anti-nuclear activists faced a prospective 20 years in jail for allegedly plotting the escape of George Blake.

It has come to our attention that the person concerned with re-opening the case years after the event, is an associate of the late H.Montgomery Hyde (Intelligence spokesperson and Tory MP) and is now investigating the activities of Spies for Peace, *an active Scottish anarchist divergence from CND at that time.*

No major arrests were made at the time but prosecutions can still follow if back bench Tories make enough fuss (as they did with Pottle and Randle).

The Southwark 2, The Feeble Full-Timer And The Laughable Revolutionaries

On October 31st 1995, John Jones, a building shop steward, and Terry Mason, a fellow worker at Southwark Council were sacked. They had refused to transfer over to Botes, a contractor more fitted to riding in a rodeo than repairing a home. The fact that these two workers took a stand while thousands of other direct labour workers have been transferred or laid off over the last seven years or so, is cause enough to celebrate.

However, this case becomes more complicated as it proceeds. The unelected full-timer, Tony O'Brien, has long been a bit of a noise in the left in UCATT, the building union. He is Secretary of the now-emasculated Construction Safety Campaign, and is close to the Workers Revolutionary Party. (The WRP obliged him by printing two pages in their paper against the Building Worker Group) O'Brien has been convenor at Southwark for 20 years, which is a telling argument for limiting full-timers' terms of office. During that time, the workforce has declined to barely 250. That in itself doesn't mark O'Brien out as any different from other direct labour organisations. But O'Brien has made a few exaggerated claims about his record. The one steward on the committee to stand up to him was John Jones.

Naturally enough, the two sacked men put a picket on the gate of the main depot in Peckham. This was taken off at O'Brien's request so that a campaign could be mounted through the union. This was agreed to, with the proviso that if no campaign appeared, the picket would be back. A week later, the picket was on again, and was greeted by a ludicrous counter demo by O'Brien and his supporters. One of these, a shop steward, even directed lorry drivers to cross the line. O'Brien's instruction of union members to cross the picket has meant that workers are reluctantly going in.

That morning, the Socialist Workers Party turned up as well. Not to offer their support, of course, but to sell papers and tell John and Terry where they'd got it wrong. When Unison gave the men £1000, the SWP got it passed not to support the picket. I know that SWP industrial strategy is to build up hopes and lead them to defeat and say "I told you so" at the end, but this is ridiculous. What should John and Terry do if they don't picket, sell papers? And this was in a "Southwark Council Workers' bulletin" full of militant language about the Southwark library strike on the front page.

The two workers are still fighting to get their respective unions to properly take up their case.

Sectarian Notes

⇒ We are hearing from all corners how well behaved Militant Labour are at the moment. When workers at JJ's Fast Foods asked Trots not to sell their papers while picketing shops for them, Militant complied, unlike the student-arrogant SWP. Scottish Anarchist had flowing praise for Tommy Sheridan in its Summer issue. Have the dreaded Tapeworm Trots reformed themselves? We have heard of other instances of good behaviour, what on earth has brought it all on?

It seems that an initiative by a certain Mr Scargill has attracted their interest. His Socialist Labour Party could attract thousands of disenchanted lefties away from Labour (exactly what Militant have been trying to do for years). However, the one snag is that Arthur doesn't want them. Seems he doesn't trust their motives and doesn't believe them when they say they won't try to take over the SLP. Militant of course protest their innocence. Methinks they protest too much.

⇒ Murky goings on at Lewisham Council, where three quarters of the Direct Labour Organisation's management have gone over to a private company started up by the Director of the DLO, Mushtaq Malik. Malik started the company, Service Team, while still employed by Lewisham. This is against Lewisham's rules, but perhaps he had permission to do so. Councillor Dave Sullivan, leader of one of the two Labour factions on the Council, has also joined Service Team. Sullivan played an influential role in the way that Direct Team was run, and tried to set it up as a private company. When this failed, Malik and co decided to go ahead anyway while still being paid by the council, and naturally enough took along Sullivan in their plans.

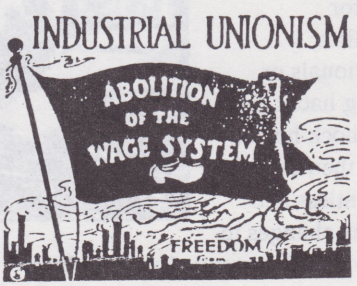
Service Team have agreed not to bid against Lewisham's DLO for any contracts. However, they've left it in such a mess that it may collapse. If that happens, they won't break their promise by stepping in. And they are well placed. Sullivan's camp control the Direct Labour committee and one of his henchmen is Chair of the important housing committee.

So far, Service Team have bid for several contracts. They have massive backing from the City, who should know a bunch of crooks when they see them, and bought the refuse collection contract in Wandsworth in November.

Sullivan has obviously learned a few things from the days when he was in Militant. Nine workers including three shop stewards were immediately sacked. When binmen demonstrated, managers chased them round by taxi threatening dismissal. Shades of the Militant Liverpool council debacle where the trots had redundancy notices sent out by taxi. Except, while Kinnock was quick to condemn Militant, Blair has uttered not a word about Sullivan.

As we go to press, Lewisham Labour Party are asking Sullivan to resign as Chair of Personnel Committee, and the Council have disassociated themselves from Service Team and their tactics. However, the same tactics were good enough for them when they attacked Direct Team workers pay and conditions last year.

You don't have to be a public school-educated front bencher to be a hypocrite in new Labour but that's the only form of equality they believe in.



Squatting after the CJA

The same day that Brixton erupted in December the Riot cops had an outing in North London. This time they were evicting squatters from Greenwood Road, Kentish Town, behind the Rainbow Church, centre of the "new movement of DIY eco-warriors" that is apparently the face of protest in the '90s.

After the eviction the riot cops were faced down for several hours by the squatters and their Rainbow Tribe neighbours shouting, "*watch out for the little people*" and "*the pixies will get you*" and throwing some fruit and a few eggs. The deployment of 70 cops in full riot gear was obviously justified in view of the leprechaun threat.

Sadly, this was probably the biggest squat resistance in London since Claremont Rd, the houses in the route of the M11 extension evicted in the winter of 1993. It is also one of the first evictions of any scale since the squatting sections of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act came into force in August 1995.

The inclusion of squatting in the CJA affected it and any squatting movement in a number of ways. The first, and most damaging, was the reporting that suggested that squatting would be made illegal. This appeared in the straight media but also in alarmist rubbish in the alternative press. The myth has become widespread amongst anyone not involved or affected by squatting but also with advice workers and, more worryingly, the homeless and others who might need to squat. It was much easier for journalists, professionals or aspiring hacks, to write shock horror stories then explain the pointless and complex changes to the law that did eventually take place.

Other developments in the squatting scene have been closely connected to the anti-roads movement. This grew out of the squatting of houses in North East London on the route of the proposed M11 extension. Houses left empty by the Department of Transport had been squatted for years but the opposition to the M11 made them a focus for resistance as well as somewhere to live for hundreds of people. Publicity at Twyford Down and victory at Oxleas Wood in South East London brought a growing anti roads movement to the local opposition to the No M11 campaign. However the road protesters always knew that there would be other protests to go to and their priorities were being nice for the cameras and appealing to public opinion. Keeping it respectable and unthreatening, an admission of inevitable defeat. Squatters and other local people had little choice but to go along with this surrender. Locked on to anything that didn't move or sitting on top of scaffolding towers held up the bailiffs long enough to put Claremont Road into squatting mythology. The D-lock replaced the ski-mask as squatter fetish gear.

Attempts to use the interest/fear/anger stirred up by the threats to squatting, real or imagined, to rebuild some sort of squatters movement in London were similarly dominated by activists with agendas outside squatting. Over the past few years the local squatting groups and networks had almost entirely ceased to exist. This was a far greater threat to squatting than the CJA. The statements that "the CJA affects us all" and that "everything is connected" made it easy for the overworked or the apathetic to allow any new energy to be used up portraying squatting as part of some rainbow coalition of "new social movements"; all sharing the same campaigning values of media friendly pacifism and a refusal to confront even the idea of state power. All a bit tough if you were squatting out of housing need rather than out of a fondness for the Levellers pop group. Without accessible local groups, squatters are isolated and more vulnerable. Squatting is more difficult without information about empties, the law, etc., and the solidarity that local groups can give you.

Instead many squatters have fallen for the line that we must put across a good image in the media. By presenting ourselves as good responsible citizens we will convince those in power not to evict us or smash up our homes. By playing to the media we capitulate to their agenda. Our actions are dictated by what the editors and journalists want. There are no differences between the political positions and aims of a (liberal, democratic) media and a (liberal, democratic) state. In the end we become good responsible citizens, in shit housing, just like we are supposed to be. Of course a number of squatters, well represented in the squatting/ alternative media, really are good responsible citizens, pushing an image of peaceful creative people who just want to make their contribution to society, doing very nicely out of it and playing big brother or big sister to any squatters movement. They have successfully *imposed* a leadership, at least of attitude, an acceptance that we play the media game. While alternative careers in arts and media are

built, any resistance is isolated as irresponsible. However it is our acceptance of this *"leadership"* that is the real problem.

Many squatted social centres are also dominated by the media image mentality and it is here that a clear refusal to confront authority immediately undermines any threat of militant resistance. The two most obvious places, the Rainbow Church, mentioned above, and the CoolTan in Brixton, now no more, are based around the idea that if we are nice, creative, small-business people etc. the council/owners won't evict us and will even give us money.

There is no intention here to challenge anything at all. You can't resist an eviction or be nasty because otherwise you will spoil the image and ruin negotiations for other buildings etc. The conclusion is that any eviction can only be resisted, if at all, within the guidelines laid down by the anti roads movement and CND. Faced with such a threat, owners have no incentive to deal sensibly with squatters at all. Both the CoolTan and the Rainbow Church have or had licences. The CoolTan went quietly, maybe things are changing at the Rainbow Church.

In contrast to defeats in Britain, squatters in the Hafenstraße in Hamburg have been allowed to keep the blocks they have squatted for over 14 years. The squatters were always in the front line against the gentrification of the area between St Pauli and the port and the resistance to eviction attempts mobilised thousands in street battles with the riot cops. Millions of deutschemarks worth of damage was caused. There have been rental agreements with the authorities in the past but these have not mellowed the attitudes of the squatters. Attempts to smear them by association with the Red Army Faction and (fairly true) media portrayal as a hotbed of revolutionary activism have completely backfired. As an attempt to end the conflict the city council are selling them the block and writing off some debts of rent and rates. It remains to be seen whether this is a victory for the squatters and the fight against gentrification or a successful attempt to buy off resistance. In either case a cosy media image and being peaceful was never a major part of the squatters' tactics.

It is difficult to persuade people that resistance and confrontation can lead anywhere other than arrest, imprisonment or a good kicking in the short term or more laws and repression in the future. However, these things are happening anyway and without showing a willingness to resist attacks will only increase. Knowing that evictions and other attacks on squatters will be resisted will make the authorities less willing to risk something worse than a couple of lines of bad publicity in the Guardian or "exposure" on the videos of camcorder activists.

The CJA was never going to make squatting illegal. The first changes to the law tightened up existing laws relating to squatting houses where someone is going to move in. The stories in the media saying that violence could now be used to evict squatters were partly alarmist and partly lazy journalism. All that changed was that it is no longer an offence to use force to enter a place where a tenant or resident is being kept out by a squatter. The incidences of violence being used by landlords owners or cops have not gone up or down since. The second part of the law brought in a new, complex civil eviction procedure, the Interim Possession Order, and made it a criminal offence not to leave within 24 hours of the order being served. These procedures are relatively rare still with only one council, Labour Tower Hamlets, using them with any success so far. If they are opposed the owners can find themselves in trouble. The University of North London tried to use these "fast track" procedures to evict squatters from the old Kentish Town site of the polytechnic at the beginning of November 95. They were opposed and didn't get their building back until January 96.

The future for squatting isn't entirely crap. The misinformation is being fought, more information about new and old laws is getting out, other squatted social spaces are more realistic about their position and their potential. There are places being opened up, especially outside London. There is some debate about getting organised, different ideas about what we can or should do, and a growing, though still small, feeling that the threat to squatting doesn't come so much from the CJA but from our own unwillingness to stand up for our homes and our space.

CPS MADNESS

The Crown Prosecution Service are appealing to the High Court to establish whether the assembly of people at Stonehenge, on the 10th anniversary of the Battle of the Beanfield, was a criminal act under the CJA!

Source: EF! Action Update

If Voting Changed Anything.....

The issue of elections to state bodies has once again become live. Anarchists today are presented with arguments for their use from two angles. Firstly, there is Murray Bookchin and his allies, the social ecologists who argue for "*libertarian municipalism*". Secondly, there is the agenda of some parts of the left who are seeking to create a new political force, against Labour and of the working class.

Bookchin raises a number of arguments in favour of participating in local elections, which I will attempt to summarise here. This is different from what *we* mean by libertarian municipalism, which is the control and management of local services by a libertarian commune. We discussed this some years ago, under the title of "Municipal Anarchy".

Bookchin envisages that any such electioneering is done as part of a popular movement for democratic control, and members try to gain seats on the council in order to build mass assemblies as an alternative. He does not see this happening at a national level and stresses that it is only one part of an overall strategy. In support of this tactic, which has been criticised as being anti-anarchist by many, he counters that Bakunin advocated similar things and that there is a long history of anarchists participating in councils and other elected bodies, albeit on a localised scale.

Let's deal with the Bakunin point first. Bakunin advocated plenty of things that modern anarchists would disagree with, and he himself would not have treated his own thoughts as set in concrete and unable to change. Bakunin said that revolutionaries could intervene on a municipal level in the mir. The mir was not the same as the town council, but was a collection of every man who worked or lived in the village, not their representatives. This is a crucial point, as the difference is one of an obviously imperfect direct democracy (men only) against representative democracy. There is also the scale - even with new technology, a set up like the mir could not work even in a London borough, let alone across a whole city.

A much greater hole in his theory is that it does not recognise what the state will do. In Australia during the 80s, socialists in New South Wales left Labor and became independent councillors. The State government introduced boundary changes which took away every single one of their seats. In Victoria, whole councils were abolished because they stood in the way of the privatising Kennett government in the 90s. Will the State sit back and allow libertarian municipalists to take over in this way - unlikely. And what is to stop the "libertarian municipalists" building alternatives like mass assemblies anyway, such as the CNT have done in Puerto Real? Doctrinaire anti-syndicalism?

Nor is lack of democracy the only problem facing us. In Tower Hamlets in London in 1986 the Liberals introduced a radical decentralisation. This resulted in the election of a nazi, and only a massive mobilisation by the Labour bureaucracy prevented his re-election. Potentially the fascists could have gained control of a local council with a budget of millions. There are also disturbing stories of the biggest libertarian municipalist group, Ecology Montreal, and the strange alliances they have made. (See issue 37 of the American Anarchy magazine). What Bookchin's allies are really doing is libertarian intervention in local state politics. Local state politics are about the pursuit of power - we are not going to be led down that road.

The other set of arguments for electoralism are harder to pin down, as they are implied rather than stated by the various advocates of "new political organisation"s. There are at least three current initiatives that I know of, and there may be many more. Disillusion with Labour and the left seems endemic. The three initiatives are: the "independent Working Class Association" sponsored by Red Action and London Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), with various anarchist and several communist groups participating: "Resistance", founded by the Colin Roach Centre: and a group centred around the Somerset Clarion, which has actually stood candidates against Labour and won. Of the three, the latter is likely to end up with Scargill's Socialist Labour Party. The other two have no definite commitment to standing candidates, but it is implied in their logic.

The Red Action initiative came from the last round of council elections when the fascist British National Party's (BNP) role in East London made clear the limitations of AFA's single issue strategy. Put simply, workers in poor districts like Tower Hamlets can see that Labour has nothing to offer them after years of attacks by Labour councils who they have far more dealings with than the Tory central government. No amount of "blaming it on the government" can excuse Labour here. The only ones to offer anything 'radical' or "alternative", albeit false, are the fascists. Groups like Militant and the Socialist Workers Party are associated with Labour in the popular mind. This was shown in a recent East London by-election, where Militant Labour, who stood a candidate against Labour, got one fifth of the vote of the nazis, who also stood. In this context, anti-fascist activity has got to be more than "Don't Vote Nazi", as it implies support for Labour, i.e. for the status quo. Red Action don't state it outright, and individual members have told me that they are not aiming to be an electoral force. However, this is where the organisation points. This is a pity, as it otherwise shows promise. Red Action are interested in working with others to talk to workers, not the left. Even though their initial coalition is somewhat reduced, there are many positive points. Obviously many anarchists won't work with them in

areas like Glasgow, where their behaviour has been outrageous, but they are at least looking in the right direction.
The Colin Roach Centre grew out of Hackney Community Defence Association and Hackney Trade Union Support Unit. Although anti-fascism is only one part of their politics, they have followed a similar line of logic to arrive at a similar position. There is no consensus about elections, the issue has surfaced a couple of times in discussions.
Although the logic is compelling in terms of anti-fascist work, we mustn't make the mistake of looking at anti-fascist activity alone. To accept the poisoned chalice of representative democracy merely to oppose the odd bonehead electorally would be wrong. Electoralism, and particularly the parliamentary variety, is fed by the mass media. To gain credibility with them, you have to discard what you believe in. Maybe that's not what these organisations are after, but it's what they could become.
What if any of these groupings, or Arthur Scargill's new Socialist Labour Party, were to win? Or let the fascists in by default? What would the reaction be of the black and Asian communities in East London if an intervention lets a fascist in? It's hardly likely to be celebratory? There have been individuals who have won both local and parliamentary seats under independent guises. While the individual concerned has usually done well, the consequences for the labour movement as a whole have been less happy.
The answer is not an easy one, but calls for precisely the type of working class organisation that the Colin Roach Centre and Red Action are moving towards. One that is built from the bottom up, and is of the working class, with its loyalty to the working class in its broadest sense, as opposed to the student and middle class oriented left.
It is long and hard work done by the comrades of the CNT in Spain that has resulted in mass village assemblies in the Puerto real area near Cadiz. The municipal councils are still in the hands of the politicians, and can still be shut down by central government, but neither can move without worrying what the people's reaction might be. Of course, Marxists of all shades will argue that we shouldn't shirk from the political arena. We say that we shouldn't separate out politics into some form of specialised activity that only certain people, i.e. our representatives, can do. The labour movement was co-opted by municipalism before. Libraries set up by workers' subscriptions were taken over by councils and are now shut by the local council, invariably Labour. Gas, water and electricity boards were originally under council control. Now they are sold off cheaply to the well off at the cost of jobs and higher prices for us. The working class departed from the left over the last fifty years. The situation we now face is a direct result of this - electoralism substituted for organisation and direct action.

MH

Labour and Arthur

It's looking more likely that the Tories will lose the next election. Blair's tactic of stealing their policies with a "caring" veneer is working. Labour have a massive lead in the opinion polls. Though it's understandable that people would welcome a Labour victory on the grounds that anything must be better, it's hard to see what, if any, gains it would bring the working class.
Labour's attitude towards the unions is to take their money while treating them publicly as if they were emitting an anti-social odour. They've said they will introduce legislation on the right to join a union, but also made it clear that the barrage of anti-union law will remain in place. So, you'll have the right to join a union which will be outlawed from defending your interests!
Meanwhile they are making it clear that capitalism will remain unrestricted in its right to exploit. The minimum wage will be at such a low level that it merely enshrines capitalism's right to pay starvation wages. Renationalising the privatised industries is off the agenda, with even the commitment to reverse rail privatisation being dropped. And their commitment to full employment looks like nothing more than more training places instead of real jobs, some of which will be compulsory.
The transformation of Labour into Tory has been too much for some, most notably Arthur Scargill. After Labour dropped Clause IV, he proposed a new Socialist Labour Party, arguing that Labour had betrayed its socialist commitment to common ownership. Well, as much as I might respect Arthur, are we really asked to believe that prior to Blair Labour was committed to common ownership? The temptation is now to list Labour governments' appalling record in their treatment of ordinary workers. Does anyone believe that Labour in power really had the slightest intention of overthrowing capitalism.
But why get involved in such sterile arguments? The sad thing is that if Scargill's call is heeded many grass roots trade unionists, having spent years trying to reform Labour, will waste more effort in establishing a new Labour Party. We must ask: What is the point? If the task is to seek common ownership then the failure of the existing Labour Party has shown that this can never be achieved through Parliament.
If however, it is to establish a left of centre social democratic party, again the failure of Labour shows the futility of this task. Labour's move to the right has as much to do with changes to the world economy as the need to win over the middle classes. The Keynesian inspired interventionist Labour government is no longer feasible. Any attempt by an individual government would unleash an attack on the economy in this era of unrestricted global finance. Wouldn't it be better if we came to terms with the momentous changes that have taken place in the economy? Instead of looking back, activists should look for new ways to fight the deregulated and increasingly part-time labour market. Instead of seeking to send more activists into the crazy world of parliamentary splendour, it would be much better to build an organisation in the heart of the workplace and working class communities which would help to fight the many day to day problems facing our class and link these struggles to the need for revolutionary change.

TC

Antifascist Demo in Czech Republic

On Saturday 9th December the Czech Anarchist Federation and other antifascists (including SkinHeads Against racial Prejudice or SHARPskins) organised a demonstration in the city of Brno to coincide with Human Rights Day. Four to five hundred people, including a sizeable contingent from the gipsy community turned up. Fascists in the Czech republic target most of their energies against the gipsy population and public opinion seems to back them up. There had been communication problems between the gipsy community and antifascist activists beforehand, so they were particularly pleased that so many had joined them on the demonstration.

The demonstration started to march through the city with torches and candles and stopped briefly to read out a statement on Human Rights. It then continued on to the main station where (according to the media) 20 skinheads were waiting for them. The skinheads were protected by the police, but after a couple of minutes a fight broke out and the police and skinheads didn't stand a chance.

Three demonstrators were caught by the police, one of them accused of assaulting a policeman, but the demonstration continued. Later two fascists were found sitting alone on a tram, they were dealt with accordingly, but were helped to safety by the police.

The demonstration ended at 5.30pm and was seen as a victory, in sharp contrast to the last similar action in '92 where only 200 demonstrators had turned up and were attacked by nearly the same number of fascists. Czech anarchists feel that the fascists are afraid and cannot get away with the sort of attacks they perpetrated in the past.

There are several fascist organisations in the Czech republic, ranging from "Hammer"skinheads to legalistic fascist organisations. There is also a fascistic Republican party in parliament, who support the segregation of gipsies.

The Czech Anarchist Federation has since moved on to taking action against NATO. Five hundred demonstrated, starting at the old Town Square in Prague. Police stopped them reaching the American Embassy so they went and demonstrated outside the castle, where the President lives. The Czech Republic wants to join NATO, and buy second hand western weapons.

Source and contact for more information on antifacist activity in Brno: Borek Meznik, Barvicova 75, 60200 Brno, Czech Republic, or e-mail him on meznik@fbm.vutbr.cz.

Bangladesh Union Fights Illegal Lockout

On December 30th 1995 the Titas Apparels Ltd factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh was closed leaving 350 people jobless. This closure was illegal because it was a reaction to the strike that had started on December 27th 1995. The registered union Titas Apparels Workers and Employees Federation affiliated to the National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh (see page 18 for more on the NGWF) decided to go on strike after a labour conflict of several months.

On June 23rd 1995 the union got its registration from the Ministry of Labour. Since then, the factory owners have tried to break the union, using intimidation and hired thugs. They also announced that the factory would have to close.

However, the union states that the factory was making a profit and had no lack of orders.

The working conditions in the factory were bad. At times wages were paid with months delay. The working week usually lasted 80 hours, and the workers had to work 7 days per week. The workers had 11 days off per year. (According to Labour Law there are 14 legal holidays per year, plus one day off per week). The factory was crowded and had insufficient ventilation, the chairs were bad, there were 2 toilets for women and 3 for men. According to Labour Law there should be a toilet for every 25 workers, at Titas there were 300 women and 50 men.

The union demanded the legal minimum wage, paying wages and overtime payments on the 7th of the next month (as stated in Law), a day off on Fridays (the equivalent of Sunday) and public holidays, the immediate stop to any threats against workers, recognition of the union and demands concerning health and safety.

The owners refused despite the involvement of the Labour Department, and the union used its right to strike on December 27th. The factory was closed on December 30th and all 350 workers were fired.

The union has asked for international support to safeguard the right to organise.

An international day of action was organised by the IWA on February 15th, in 22 countries.

Please send donations (remember your money will go a long way in Bangladesh, US$10 is a month's wages for a garment worker there) and solidarity greetings to the following address.

The National Garments Workers Federation of Bangladesh,
G.P.O. Box 864, Dhaka,
Bangladesh,
FAX: Attention: Amin : 880-2-867485

For more info contact:
The Solidarity Federation - IWA, PO Box 384, Preston, Lancs, England.
Email:
100517.1573@Compuserve.Com

New Aussie Metal Workers Paper

Syndicalist metal workers down under have started a new paper. It's called ***All Scrap*** and is at PO Box 678, Hamilton, NSW 2303, Australia

Victory For Staffing Solutions Workers in Norfolk

Last issue we reported on organising attempts by Norwich Solidarity Centre around agency workers, particularly at Staffing Solutions and WH Knights. This issue we have the pleasure to report a small victory.

Staffing Solutions have now ended their illegal system of charging workers for ear protectors. Solidarity Centre members first leafleted the factory informing workers of their rights. Subsequently, they met management of both companies where they agreed at their request to drop this practice. NSC are now trying to get more agency workers involved and take up more issues like this.

Health Food Coffee Con

Aside from producing people of backbone prepared to fight for their rights, Chiapas also produces some of the world's best coffee. Not surprisingly, working conditions for the producers are terrible, with the bosses using private armies *"guardias blancas"* to enforce them.

Large coffee plantations, or fincas, are usually owned and managed by foreigners, and our comrades in the German FAU have unearthed quite a bit about one in particular, Finca Irlanda, which has been organic since 1928. It is sold in health food stores in Europe under the name "Fair Trade" and in the US as "Cafe Altura".

The story starts where a member of the FAU Health Food Branch saw an interview with a rebel which said that conditions at Irlanda were little better than at "normal" capitalist fincas. Nevertheless, it is sold as "Fair Trade" at a handsome profit to people who believe they're helping producers by doing it.

The importer's name is Lebensbaum (Tree of Life), run by an ex-Maoist, with a turnover of US$10m. FAU contacted him asking for a statement and demanding he urge Finca Irlanda improve pay and conditions. He replied that the Peters family who own the finca, are nice humanists and do a lot for the environment and the coffee is hyper organic. Nothing about the wage slaves!

Subsequently, the FAU have called a boycott of the coffee, and Lebensbaum in general. The leftist and green health food shop bosses have, perhaps surprisingly if one takes their statements at face value, been generally unsupportive. The FAU Health Food Workers intend to carry on until they get results.

To contact FAU health food branch e-mail: fauhh@anarch.cl.sub.de
or fax ++49 30 893657

Comrades! Citizens!

The Spanish Parliament decided to grant citizenship to all who fought in the International Brigades during the civil war.The Communist Party has been pushing the idea for years. Juan Negrin promised them all Spanish citizenship if the Republic won. Jack Jones, a former volunteer now into OAP politics, said it was 'very gratifying'. He would like to go back to receive his citizenship, adding perhaps cynically, "I wonder if it includes pension rights". News for you, Jack. The stinking goverrnment that now exists in Spain doesn't even pay pension rights to Spanish-born citizens who fought against Franco unless they had a rank in the Regular, or the CP-reconstituted arrmy that destroyed the revolution. Those who fought against fascism in the Anarchist Resistance that followed his victory, Spanish or not, and spent years in prison as a consequence, get nothing at all and are expected to live on thin air or beg.

MacMuck

A German Court in the city of Kassel has ruled that McDonalds have to pay an anti rubbish tax. McDonalds have said this will take 80% of their profits and are threatening to close down!

Answers to Quiz

1. Scott's depiction of the romantic past of chivalry and aristocracy impressed a snobbish generation of the last century whose parents worshipped money and materialism, but who fancied themselves as nobility, and for spiritual aspiration turned to Anglo-Catholicism. Scott's novels also spawned the myth about Scottish meanness. His attitude to the merchant class was taken to be of the Scots race, his contemporary English readers never recognising the caricature was also of themselves. In this century the jokes were sparked off anew by the (right wing) comedian Sir Harry Lauder.

2. They sold him. Charles I of Scotland and England was sold by the Scots to the English Parliament, which wanted him for high treason. *(Any chance of the putative Charles III being sold to the Americans or maybe the Tsarless Russians)?*

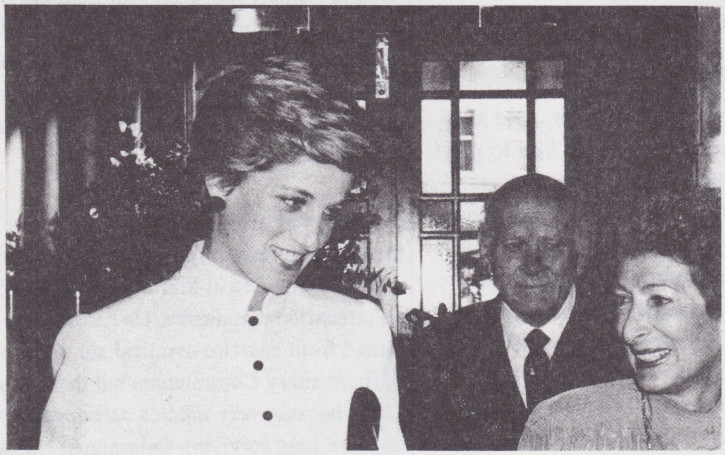
3. It is probably the last relic of a forgotten religion. Ancient legends about a Monster are used to support supposed sightings, but they also apply to almost every expanse of inland water in Scotland, a few in Wales and some in Northern England. The others are ignored and the Horned God receives his last worship as a tourist attraction.

4. The young William Gallacher was the odd man out impressed by Lenin's arguments, specially directed at him though addressed to an intenational audience. He had already turned from anarcho-syndicalism to Anti-Parliamentary Communism but thanks to Lenin became very much a parliamentary one as a long surviving Communist MP with an occasional colleague. Finally becoming a favourite with Tory MPs, they once even obliged him by allowing an unopposed First Reading of a Private Bill to make Britain a Soviet state.

5. The disaster was King James VI of Scotland grabbing the chance of becoming James I of England. It was then thought by the nobiblity of both countries that their interests and those of his dynasty were to rule three kingdoms from London. They saw no need for the people of England, Scotland or Ireland (Wales was taken for granted anyway) to be consulted.

Why ex-Kings are dangerous

Half a century after the events concerned, the Guardian and the BBC unearthed the facts about Edward VIII (later Duke of Windsor). Only their interpretations are dubious. They say the Establishment suspected Edward for his fascist views, and used the Mrs Simpson affair as an excuse to get rid of him. Certainly Edward collaborated with the Nazis before and during the war and by law should have been hanged for high treason . He deserted his post in front of the enemy in France during the war and went to Spain. Another death sentence was due. Prime Minister Churchill then sent him off on a handsome salary to govern the Bahamas, where he gave information and advice to Berlin (a third death sentence!), engaged in wartime currency trading (meriting only a lengthy prison sentence this time) and post-war black marketing (just a fineable offence). But it is nonsense to say, as they do, that this was because of his 'natural fascism'.



The Royal Family are exposed as having covered his unpunished criminal record up but some nagging questions remain. The bulk of the British Establishment, royal and otherwise, was fascistic and pro-Nazi before the war,. Earl Mountbatten, though his close German relatives were active Nazis, some even in the SS, was the only anti-Nazi in the Royal Family (his wife's grandfather was a German Jew married into British aristocracy, he himself was pro-Communist). But how did Edward differ from a logical mould with which Prime Minister Baldwin had certainly no difficulty? When the pre-Abdication crisis came, Sir Oswald Mosley backed the King but they did not become friends until after the War when both were in comfortable retreat in France for much the same reason. The support Edward in crisis solicited at home, against the Establishment was not from the street fascists but from those who saw the military menace of Nazi Germany, especially Winston Churchill (then a back-bencher out of line with his party). Mountbatten enlisted the aid of those who wanted Churchill as PM. His go-between, double-agent/journalist Claud Cockburn, later described it as an unofficial Conservative-Communist front. It aimed to appeal to a much wider segment of the public than Mosley. Allied to the natural monarchists and those swayed by his owns charms, it was thought by the king to be irresistible.

He was brought up in the monarchical tradition and hedged about with the divinity that surrounded it. He was worshipped at home and overseas throughout his youth on a scale now unbelievable. He could do as he wished, and was built up as a demi-god even among the deprived as someone who was concerned about them (he never actually did anything. Hitler had to work hard to get comparable status. It is understandable Edward liked what he saw in Germany but had no desire to be a stooge like the King of Italy under Mussolini. It irked him to be one under Baldwin. The Government only asked him to respect the 'Constitutional obligation not to marry a dubious American divorcee' lest it destroy the monarchical mystique. The Establishment, Government and Labour Opposition defeated him. The 'irresistible coalition' vanished. His upper-class friends dropped him immediately with sudden engagements in far off corners of the world. They had wanted to be his closest courtiers and but did not want to fall out with the vindictive new consort who had a still-unexplained grudge against him (she is now the revamped cosy dear old 'Queen Mum' of newspaper hype). Edward retired bitter. Even his staunchest champion, Churchill, ditched him after 'National Rat Week' (Osbert Sitwell) when the moronic new king and his formidable wife put the boot in.

The subsequent repeated treasons and criminality were inevitable. He was brought up to do as he wished. What need to obey laws which were passed for his subjects? The Government recognised he was an attractive prize for the Nazis who could use him to 'legitimise' an Occupation

government. A king is always a king. If the Russians had not wiped out their royals, the Nazis would certainly have imposed the 'rightful Emperor'. The Japanese invaders did exactly that in China. A century and a half before, the French wiped out their royal family, but not sufficiently. There was still an heir who led the enemy forces against the French, and later executed as traitors those like Marshal Ney who had fought for their own country under Napoleon. The latter died under suspicious circumstance in the hands of the British, who knew from their own repeated experience that ex-kings, even frustrated kings, like tigers wounded by hunters, are dangerous. Nobody should ever question the danger, to conservatives no less than to revolutionaries, of allowing deposed monarchs and even their heirs the luxury of being 'kings over the water', even on a coral reef, even to live at all.

Two corollaries follow, the first being to reconsider the case of Trotsky, still worshipped by legitimist Bolsheviks.

WAS TROTSKY A TRAITOR?

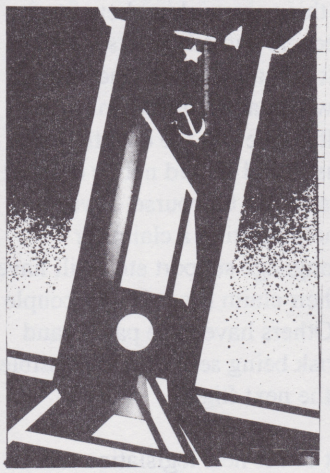
Trotsky must be reckoned an ex-king or of comparable status when he left Russia with all his retinue and private fortune, and with his 'revolutionary' if not royal mystique intact, thanks to American admirers. Was he not equally a dangerous threat to Stalin as Edward to the monarchy? Stalin for all his astuteness woke up to that too late and let him go. Afterwards in a series of trials universally stated to be false in spite of open confessions, Trotsky and all his Russian followers were "unmasked" as traitors and conspirators with the Nazis against Russia - or were they?

It seems every anti-Stalinist including anarchists thought the trials a frame-up, but I personally always suspected what they were judging was not Trotsky but Stalin, on the basis that someone so ruthless must always be truthless. I always felt that though Stalin was a vicious dictator, it does not follow that everyone with whom he came into conflict was by that token any good (Hitler for one), especially those on whose legacy he had attained power.

Why is it unthinkable that Trotsky (with more tragic family reasons for bitterness) did not do an 'Edward VIII' like most others in his position? In power, his policy was that the Soviet revolution could be spread abroad by armed intervention. So far as the Soviet Union was concerned he never until his dying day (and his disciples thereafter) advocated internal revolution against Stalin, nor did the Old Bolsheviks who came up for trial. The 'soviet revolution' had made Russia a 'workers state', he argued,all it needed was the overthrow of Stalin's dictatorship and bureaucracy. How do you overthrow or alter a dictatorship except by revolution or by foreign armed intervention? If the first was out, there was a Leninist precedent of accepting help from Imperial Germany. On the German side there was no more reason why they should refrain from helping Trotsky (before Hitler) than they had with Lenin, while after Hitler, once he started planning war, Trotsky was no more unacceptable a partner than Litvinov or Molotov later with whom they undoubtedly did collaborate.

DIANA AND MARILYN

In that now notorious interview, the Princess of Wales revealed her marital disputes and claimed to want to be the Queen of Hearts. The last person who functioned in that role was Marilyn Monroe. Her downfall was in becoming involved with the Head of State, John Kennedy. Too beautiful to be discarded, too dangerous to live, Marilyn compromised the White House.



Diana has compromised Buckingham Palace. The mystery of the star's drugs overdose and the visit by CIA agents before and after her death has never been cleared up. Does anyone blame Diana for throwing up her food? Wouldn't anyone in the circumstances, now food tasters are hard to get?

albert meltzer

Asylum Seekers Attacked

Attacks on immigrants coming to Britain are nothing new, but have become increasingly brutal of late. The Government have sought to depict immigrants and asylum seekers as a drain on jobs, housing finances etc. whereas in the last few years 3,000 more people have left Britain per year than have settled here. Far from being 'swamped' by asylum seekers, only 10% of applicants for political asylum within Europe opt for Britain. This is hardly surprising considering the treatment of immigrants here; the killing of Joy Gardener by asphyxiation was a particularly graphic example of this, but several others have died trying to escape immigration officials recently, while others languish in detention centres.

Increased immigration?

Faced with having to account for economic disaster for the many, and obviously not wanting to blame capitalist collapse, the Home Office has denounced a traditional scapegoat. It is the number of people seeking asylum from (other governments') tyranny that have 'strained our resources'.

One of the factors affecting the increase in asylum claims is the growth of nationalism, as people are driven out of their own homes through 'ethnic cleansing'. The world is becoming divided into trading blocks where the make up of governments is increasingly irrelevant and where bodies like the IMF, the World Bank and multinationals dictate economic policies. Nationalism has become an attractive concept as people endeavour to gain as much power within their local economy as the IMF and associates will allow. However real self determination within such confines is elusive.

The British State likes to portray itself as a benign democracy; a haven of decency where thousands flock in search of social housing, health services, jobs and benefits. This would be laughable if the implications weren't so serious.

The Benefit Cuts

The Government have used their 'swamping' mythology to justify the curbing of benefits entitlements to those coming from abroad. The Habitual Residence Test was brought in last year; ostensibly to curb the evils of 'benefit tourism'. The predictable result being the denial of benefits to hundreds of British Citizens, many who have lived here all their lives, after returning from abroad.

New legislation came into force on 5th February this year, curbing benefits for asylum seekers and other persons from abroad. It was alleged that the 70% of refugees who make their claim for asylum after entering the country were opportunists, and should not be entitled to benefits at all. Of course, anyone needing help drafting a claim for asylum, language support etc., will have to delay their claim for at least a couple of days. Others have false papers and dare not risk being sent back to possible death on the next flight.

The effect of the new legislation will be that thousands of people will be left with no income whatsoever, no entitlement to social housing and most will have no access to employment. Private landlords, housing associations and local authorities are already refusing to let properties to asylum seekers in anticipation of housing benefit cut-offs.

Dogma or Economics?

The legislation has been justified as a money saver, but spending implications for social services departments are enormous where refugees have children lining with them. Such considerations have lead to the bizarre scenario of Tory flagship Westminster Council taking judicial review proceedings against the government to force them to scrap the legislation or provide extra social services resources.

The attacks are clearly not motivated by financial considerations alone. They are in part an attempt to gain votes by appealing to racists, and in part an attempt to fall in line with the EU's drive towards a 'fortress Europe' where immigration restrictions are strictly enforced to suit the needs of capitalism within the European market.

In an economy based on collective labour, immigrant workers would be welcome and their contribution recognised. However under capitalism, immigrants are only welcomed when extra bodies are needed to share a burden (industrial or military).

White Lists

As well as the benefit restrictions, the government has introduced a 'white list' of 'safe countries'. Anyone seeking asylum from one of the named countries will be automatically refused. The original list included Nigeria, Algeria and Sri Lanka. Two weeks after the list was leaked, Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed by the Nigerian authorities and there were massacres in Sri Lanka. The concept of 'safe states' is obviously a fallacy. All states exist to maximise the prosperity of those in power, and to a greater or lesser extent punish and persecute those who threaten their existence or legitimacy.

The original and revised 'white lists' include countries which Britain sells arms to in the full knowledge that the arms are used to repress civilian populations. Our economy relies on the oppression of peoples abroad and at home. Asylum seekers are an embarrassment and the state benefits when their claims of persecution are discredited.

Immigration controls at work

Employers are now required to check the immigration status of workers or face penalties. Thousands of immigrants work in sweatshops making massive profits for factory owners. Ironically the CBI has expressed concern over this aspect of the Act, not out of concern for civil liberties or human rights of course, but because these profits are threatened. 'Lefty' Hackney council handed in a list of the names of 800 black employees to

the Home Office for checking before the Bill even became an Act.
The requirement to check immigration status extends beyond the workplace to schools, hospitals, housing services, colleges etc. Teachers will be asked to grass on pupils, nurses on patients, housing officers on tenants.....

Resistance?

Our aim must be to ensure that immigrants, whether asylum seekers or otherwise, are not forced to leave Britain on account of these measures.
The Refugee Council, other refugee organisations, churches etc. have all pledged to set up alternative welfare initiatives, but their action to date has consisted of writing patronising letters about poor destitute refugees to the national press and lobbying MPs.
Despite having substantial funds to set up night shelters / free meal services / extra advice services, on the 5th February, when the regulations came into force, none of these services had been set up.

One of the first effects of the Act will be the removal of Housing Benefit to new comers and to those whose claims for asylum are refused. Asylum seekers will need support and advice to help them continue to stay in their homes for as long as possible, through fighting possession proceedings in the courts, resisting evictions physically and forcing local authorities and housing associations to waive rents. Night shelters and the odd hot meal are not good enough. Refugees have ample experience of fighting back against their oppressors and need support in their struggle; not charity.

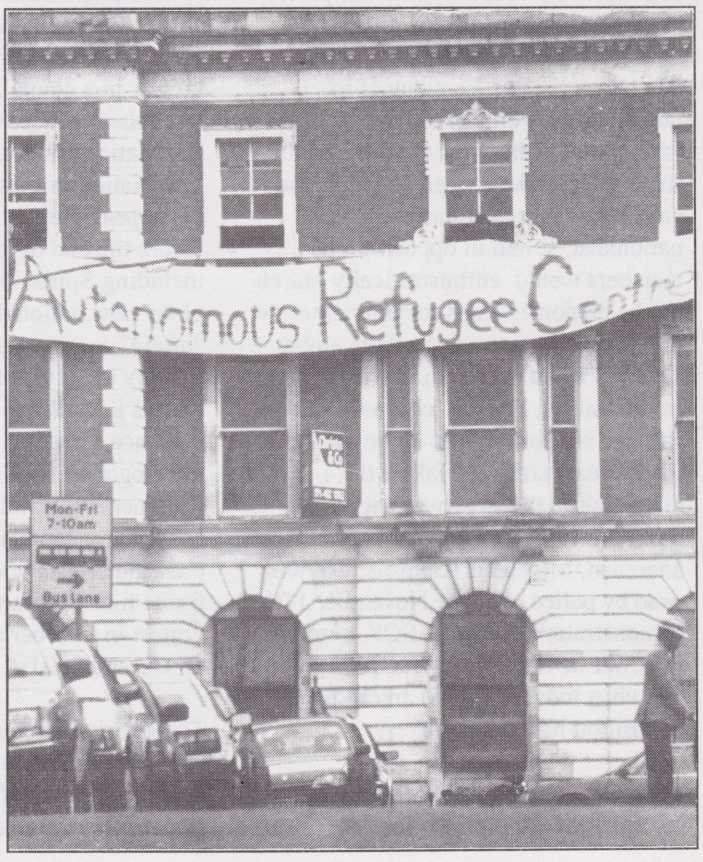
Empty property should be seized and used for accommodation and organising centres for those who become homeless. The Refugee Council has refused to support such action, stating that their position is to advise refugees on how to sleep rough! One refugee recently had his toes amputated due to frostbite from sleeping on London's streets; this apparently is preferable (and safer funding wise?) to advocating direct action.

Unions and other workplace organisations should be encouraged to sponsor members who are asylum seekers offering practical and financial support; aid should be given to immigrant workers wishing to set up workplace organisations/ join unions. They should support workers who refuse to grass on colleagues and service users. In particular we should organise locally, publicising local cases and involving local communities, workplace and tenants organisations against deportations and the inevitable attempts to evict refugees from their homes.

ARCH

One self help initiative has been the squatting of an empty magistrates court in Stoke Newington, London. The 'Autonomous Refugee Centre Hackney' (ARCH) was set up by local squatters, The Refugee Support Group from the Colin Roach Centre and others.
Practical support (including resisting two attempts at illegal eviction) has been given by local Kurdish and Turkish groups, some churches and local shops.
However despite it being the only space for homeless refugees in London, the Refugee Council has still refused to lend support due to the 'illegality' of squatting. They don't however seem to worry about recommending the criminal practice of sleeping rough!

ARCH is due to be evicted soon, but this was expected and the plan is to open a new building and to continue to build support for the use of large empty buildings for housing, food and meeting space as well as flats and houses preferably in existing communities where people can get support from neighbours. So far there is only one refugee staying at ARCH, however the numbers of refugees effected by the legislation will build up slowly, and space will become increasingly necessary.

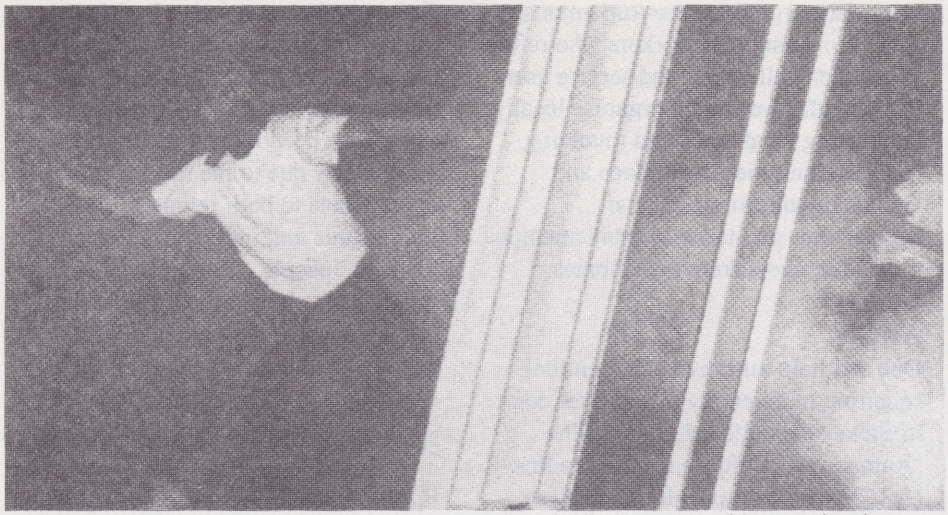


Similar large squatted buildings in France have been used to both house immigrant and French homeless and to provide space for organising against immigration attacks an homelessness. They have been largely successful, particularly due to the linking of issues of relevance to both refugees, immigrants and indigenous French homeless people. On the down side, though there have been predictable problems with 'sympathetic' lefty careerists taking over the running of campaigns and buildings, effectively silencing the voices of those living there.

If the Refugee Council, church groups, etc. ever come to their senses and get over their obsession with 'sticking to the law' and start to support projects like ARCH in their attempts to make this legislation unworkable, this is a danger we must be wary of. These initiatives must stay in the hands of the communities that use them.

Contacts: ARCH c/o SQUASH 0171 226 8938
Colin Roach Centre 0181 533 7111

NEWS FROM GREECE



With a bit of luck, by the time this issue of Black Flag hits the streets Greece will be in mourning for Prime Minister Papandreou, his wife will have fled into exile, the journalists will have left their tent outside his hospital and the infighting over his successor will be in full swing. His obituaries will say things about what a great socialist leader he was and how he brought Greece out of the shadow of the Colonels. The Greek Anarchist movement won't be mourning him.

Papandreou's PASOK (socialist party) always rode on the backs of the resistance to the dictatorship. Unlike other socialist parties many of its members early on were involved in (sometimes armed) resistance. PASOK's rhetoric has always been as leftist and anti-imperialist as it has been nationalist. When in opposition its members would enthusiastically march on the demonstrations to commemorate the Polytechnic uprising of November 17th 1973 and even join in the fighting. In opposition, PASOK unions would call and support strikes. In power 11 of the 22 years since the fall of the dictatorship, the story was very different. In 1985 a 15 year old anarchist, Michaelis Kaltezas, was shot dead by police after the November 17th demonstration. Since PASOK's return to power in 1993 repression of the anarchist movement and any radical opposition has increased.

Everyday policing in Exarheia, part of central Athens notorious for anarchists, drugdealing cops, and interesting bars, looks like a military occupation with riot cops toting machine guns and gas a regular sight. Fortunately, they have been no more successful in controlling the actions of small groups such as the Wolves of Exarheia or the Wild Geese of the City than any anarchist federation or newspaper.

1995 saw many arrests in both Athens and Thessaloniki. Four Anarchists are in prison in Athens accused of three separate armed robberies. Marinos, a well known militant, went on hunger strike. His last appeal was turned down on Jan 3rd 1996 after 61 days. By then he was in a coma. Anarchists occupied the Athens offices of Amnesty International and the Athens Lawyers Association in protest at the refusal of his appeal. He was released shortly before the end of January. Two others including Spiros Dapergolas publisher of the new national anarchist paper "*alpha*" were arrested in an armed robbery in July. A fourth comrade, Kostas Kalameras was arrested on evidence extracted under heavy interrogation from one Angelidou. Kalameras is a well known figure in the anarchist movement and the police have used the arrests of other anarchists to frame him. He went on hungerstrike in protest in October and was finally bailed on December 21st.

The Greek anarchist movement takes solidarity seriously and a march in support of political prisoners, specifically Kalameras, took place in Thessaloniki with 150 people. The Police attacked the march and arrested four, the rest of the demonstrators occupied the theology faculty of the university. Pirate stations called for support and demonstrators gathered outside with a PA and handed out leaflets. The police attacked again until they were driven off with molotovs. Since 1974 the police have been banned from school and university premises, hence the regular occupations often against the wishes of the student leaders. The "asylum" has been broken several times. In 1991 the police set fire to the polytechnic in Athens and stormed it. After occupations in January 94 PASOK attempted unsuccessfully to remove the asylum status.

The occupation ended on 16th of November as occupiers joined a student demonstration. The police had threatened the students if they marched with the anarchists and the left-wing leaders marched 100 metres behind the anarchists. Over 1000 anarchists marched in Thessaloniki on the November 17th commemoration march and despite provocation they chose not to respond violently on this occasion.

The court case of the arrested anarchists was a farce. The president of the court was the wife of a police chief. Ilias Hatzliradis and Panos Sofos were sentenced to three and a half years and Yannis Anagnostu got two and a half years. The fourth, Sofia Kiritsi, who was brought to court from hospital is awaiting sentencing. The charges were swearing at authority, resistance to authority, standing against authority by co-ordinated action. Fighting broke out at the court when the cops tried unsuccessfully to arrest one of the supporters.

1500 people marched on the 23rd of November against repression and for the release of prisoners. This time the police did not attack the march.

Meanwhile in Athens the commemoration of the polytechnic uprising was taking place. In 1994 TV cameras had been attacked when they

tried to film demonstrators. The media are a regular target and their vans and journalists' cars are often firebombed or trashed. This year they had heavy police protection. The cops used gas, a fairly regular tactic, and 1700 people occupied the polytechnic (!) The cops laid siege to the buildings refusing to let medics in or anyone out. PASOK and communist party members were assisting the police to restore order. At 8am they stormed it and arrested 504 people, divided them into three groups, students, minors and workers, and held 136. 38 minors (12-15) were among those arrested. A 14 year old boy was beaten by 50 riot police outside the polytechnic. 23 people who had been taken to hospital suffering from gas or other injuries were taken to the police HQ with no medical support. Women were strip searched in front of male police officers. Several houses were raided including the Anarchist Archive, which was taken away. 1000 people marched in protest. After several more solidarity actions and demonstrations the 136 were released pending their court hearings. A number of people have been convicted already of charges such as flag-burning, damage to public property, disturbing the socio-economic life of the city. Most of them, around 65 remain free pending a further hearing, the courts are bowing to pressure to appear milder. Four comrades were ordered to be jailed immediately for 3 years and 4 months but they were tried in absentia and have not been arrested yet.

This was similar to events around the commemoration the year before when squats were raided before the demonstration and anarchists were arrested outside the polytechnic. Then the polytechnic was occupied again until the prisoners were released. On that occasion there was a lot of argument whether attacks on the cops should stop as the prisoners were being released or continue to keep up the pressure and ...hell, they're cops anyway.

The demonstrations around the November 17th commemorations have always ended in confrontations with the police. The repression which follows is getting more serious as the police tactics improve. The motivation seems to be a determination to crush the anarchist movement and in particular it's relationship with the militant high schools movement.

The strength of the anarchist movement is its diversity and breadth but there is also little unity. Militant actions against cops, drug pushers, media and business scum are regular. The anarchists have considerable notoriety but not much influence except in the high schools movement. Greece has only a small industrial working class and only rarely any autonomous workers movement. Unions and many social movements are controlled by the political parties and they are as happy to use the anarchists' militancy when it suits them as to try to destroy the anarchist movement when it is no use to them.

The anarchists are determined to face up to state terrorism and neo-liberalism and call on comrades internationally to take action against Greek embassies and businesses in solidarity.

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8 Aristidou 10559 Athens

A-News: PO Box 30557
1033 Athens

Radio Utopia (fax) 031 207043
Radio Kirotos (fax) 031 245962
(Thessaloniki pirate stations)

SHANGHAI:

The most celebrated modern Chinese writer Li Pei-kan, known as Pa Chin (new spelling Ba Jin) celebrated his 92nd Birthday in November, fit and well despite years of past sufffering for his anarchism. His collected translations in ten volumes will be published in Chinese this year.
Chen Zilli, vice secretary of fhe Communist Party, indicating 'regret' for 'past treatment', thanked him for his conribution to the Shanghai New Library.

Report from Bangladesh

I visited Bangladesh for a week in November 95 to meet the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) and other unions. The NGWF have been in contact with the International Workers Association (the anarcho-syndicalist International) for over a year. The Solidarity Federation has been in regular correspondence and providing solidarity with the NGWF throughout this period.

Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, became independent after a vicious civil war in which millions died, either from the bullets of the Pakistan army or from the starvation that resulted from the war. The short life of this country has never seen a stable government, just a succession of coups and counter-coups between the various factions of military and civilian bureaucracy. The only consistent thing has been the poverty and misery of capitalism.

Recent years has seen some stability with the shambolic election of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP). These elections were a joke and the result was fixed. The BNP was an alliance of all the competing factions so it was the same people anyway.

The political situation at the time of our visit was extremely tense. There were constant demonstrations and much violence between the different factions, mainly Islamic fundamentalists and counter-fundamentalists (made up of various left groups). Whilst we were there fundamentalists attacked some student residences and burnt them down because of the students' anti-Islamic ways. Two students were killed trying to escape in an auto-rickshaw, after the fundamentalists set fire to it. In protest at the failure of the police to do anything about this a number of students chained themselves to a fence in a park on hunger strike demanding action. The students seem to be dominated by the Bangladesh Workers Party a sort of social democratic communist party, using communist rhetoric but social democrat in practice. The government had collapsed and elections are due this year. People laughed when they read in the papers that the elections would be fair because the army is going to supervise and make sure they were.

Poverty

The country itself is desperately poor, one of the world's poorest nations. The poverty is beyond belief. While on the visit I saw many hundreds of people begging, some just lying in the street dying of hunger, everywhere we went there was people asking for money or food. I was offered babies in the street. It was explained to me that this was so I would take the baby home and give it a chance of life as they would surely die otherwise. It really was heart breaking. The people who were lucky enough to work and thus to eat and have somewhere to live were not much better off. The homes of the workers I visited could only be described as shanty town slums, though the people who lived in them kept clean and made them very homely. We visited an area where the homes were built over a lake on bamboo poles. Many thousands of people lived here most of them garment workers. The lake was an open cesspit as the houses had no water or sanitation, people just crapped through a hole in the floor directly into the lake below, where people were wading about in it growing rice and other crops. I thought at first that this was some sort of squatted area but people actually pay rent to live here. The houses, made of bamboo and tin sheeting roofs were 10 feet square just enough room for a bed and a few sticks of furniture, usually a couple of families, about 8 people. The rent for these houses is about 1000 Takka per month, the same as the average wage of a garment worker - about $25 US per month.

The NGWF

The NGWF was founded in the early 90s and has currently 15 - 20 000 members, out of a workforce of a million. They are based in the main industrialised areas of Bangladesh, though mostly in the capital Dacca. The workers usually work 7 days a week from eight in the morning until eight at night, often later, producing clothes mainly to export to Europe. The average age of a garment worker is 18 though many are as young as 9. The factories are sweat shops. Those I visited were unionised and I was told the conditions were much better than in non unionised factories.

Around 80% of the garment workers are women as is the case with the membership of the NGWF. The union is committed to direct action and its structure is the same as the CNT (the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union). Though the union has no written revolutionary aims its practice and approach to day to day struggle give it a revolutionary nature. The NGWF has had to fight extremely hard to establish itself, the majority of other unions in Bangladesh are just fronts for political parties. There is a constant battle between these unions often violent to win over workers to their particular political faction. The NGWF has managed to stay independent despite the pressures of these parties. The bosses also resort to violence to prevent the union organising. The union is very careful when it tries to organise in a factory because the moment the owners discover them they will immediately sack the workers concerned.

Unemployment in Bangladesh means life on the streets and ultimately starvation.

If the union in a particular factory is strong enough they will take action.

This usually starts with a walk out, demanding union recognition, though often they occupy the factory to prevent the growing trend of employers to shut down the factory once they discover the union. These struggles, not just for recognition but any demand the workers make, are usually very bitter with the workers being violently attacked by gangs of heavies. They often try to split the workers by offering some more money if they return or if this doesn't work they try death threats. In these circumstances I found it totally inspiring that they stay solid on the whole. Once a factory is unionised fully they start to improve the situation of the workers there. One of the biggest problems the workers face is that the bosses often do not pay them for months on end, basically until an order has been completed. This is a critical situation for the workers as if they do not get regular pay they have no food, housing, etc. So one of the first demands of the union is that they are paid weekly. If the union is strong they always use direct action as this works quickest 95% of the time. I heard stories of locking bosses in cupboards until they agreed to pay up, occupations, pickets of the bosses' houses, go slows and sabotage. If the union is not confident of a solid strike they will take court action because there are laws to supposedly protect workers, though it can take up to 2 years and then the owner usually appeals, which of course takes just as long. I was told of cases that lasted 7 years. The NGWF always has many people going through the court system, who receive no money during this process. The NGWF has no money, though the members do their best to help support their comrades.

Women Workers

One of the main areas the NGWF works is improving conditions of women workers. Women who work in the garment sector are usually paid less than men and have no maternity rights and virtually no child care provision. Women's status in Bangladesh, an Islamic country, is that they are second class citizens. Their fight to improve the rights of women means they are a target for fundamentalists. The NGWF office, (office is rather a grand term for the lean to shed up a backstreet) has been fire-bombed and women going to the office have been attacked. It is hard to explain the difference between the women union members and the few other women we met. The best example I can give was when, one evening I was in the office chatting with some union members and a woman came in. She was wearing a veil and when she saw us, both men and women, she hurriedly left. She was pursued by a couple of the women who returned much later. They explained that she had left because there were men in the room and her husband would not approve. She worked in a factory with no union and she and her brother had been sacked because they had demanded their wages, they had not been paid for 3 months. They had heard of the union but her brother thought they were just like the other unions and saw no point. She had 2 children to feed and her husband was not working.
She was 15 and desperate. The women who caught up with her persuaded her to come to the office the next day to see what could be done. On the last day of the visit I recognised her in the group who came to say goodbye, no veil and she confidently shook hands with me. I asked some of the others what had happened and they said that the other women had been to her house and had a lot of talks with her and her husband, took her to meet other women in the factories. They said that when women got together it did not take long for them to shake off the chains.
The NGWF has great difficulty in organising meetings of its members because of the hours they work and the problems of transport and money, but when they do they tend to be on the role of women. These meetings were mainly women only but they had many mixed meetings. There is little point in women being treated with respect at work but like slaves at home.

Child Labour

Internationally there has been much concern about the amount of child labour in the Bangladesh garment industry and the US has passed a law stopping the import of Bangladeshi goods involving child labour. The NGWF are actively opposed to this. They point out that usually the children are the only earners in a family and if they lose their jobs the family will starve.
The NGWF's argument is that the only way to abolish child labour is to improve the economic situation of the workers. The union has a list of demands to improve the situation of child workers. They are demanding that children get paid time off work to attend school and that once they have finished school they get increased wages. They also have a number of demands concerning health and safely with regard to children, such as improved lighting, guards on machinery, etc. Child labour is defined as children under 14 the NGWF want this extended to 16 as long as the education rights are in place.

The Friday Campaign

The NGWF's current campaign is to reduce the working week for garment workers from 7 days o 6, demanding Fridays off. (Friday is the Islamic equivalent to Sunday and the majority of Bangladeshi workers have Fridays off work). The NGWF see this as their most critical campaign yet. Not only does it improve conditions but it will also enable the union to function easier, allow them to have more meetings and develop their democracy more fully. They very much depend upon their 3 paid workers to administer the union and provide the communications between the membership. These workers are only paid as much as they earnt as garment workers and are immediately recallable. The current campaign for Fridays off began in November and in the next few months, assuming the garment factory owners do not give in, the workers will take Fridays off anyway. This will bring a massive clamp down on the union. They have been demonstrating regularly and some of these demonstrations have met with heavy police action.
They have no illusions about what will happen when they stop working on Fridays but are confident that they can win, the tactics of solidarity and direct action have never failed them before.

Shaun Ellis Jan 96

Selling repression - COPEX and its critics

What have *Peace News, Sporting Life*, and *Intersec* (an arms industry magazine) got in common?

They have all fallen into the bad books of COPEX, the Covert and Operational Procurement Exhibition following COPEX's last exhibition at Sandown Exhibition Centre. Peace News, along with Campaign Against the Arms Trade, National Peace Council, and Green Line magazine are facing different stages of legal action. Five CAAT supporters who wrote to the manager of Sandown complaining about the exhibition have also been served with writs.

COPEX got upset after a film crew, posing as an arms company, rented a stall and filmed secretly at one of their exhibitions. The resulting film, Channel 4 Dispatches' "The Torture Trail", accused British Aerospace of complicity in the trade of electro shock batons. Hardly an earth shattering revelation but worse than the bad publicity was the sabotage of the Stadthalle conference centre in Germany before COPEX Bonn leading to its cancellation in 1994. 1995's event was also cancelled and an announced event in Cologne for 1996 has also been abandoned.

Unable to hit the people who are doing the damage, COPEX's amateur dramatic founder, Julian Winkley, issued a writ against the National Peace Council who settled out of court, promising not to repeat the allegations about shock batons, and paying £3000 costs and damages. Next for the treatment were CAAT, named individuals were served, based on signatures to articles in CAAT newsletters and the CAAT supporters were served soon afterwards. Peace News reported the action and received its first ever libel writ. Green Line reported this and got a writ of their own. The Peace Pledge Union have also received a solicitor's letter.

So what had Sporting Life done? Sandown Exhibition centre is connected with the race course and Sporting Life reported the existence of the exhibition They were the first to be sued but the case was dropped when they demanded access to a list of all exhibitors and visitors.

Intersec is the best of them all. They fell out with COPEX in 1994 over COPEX's refusal to pay their VAT. COPEX have barred them from their exhibitions. In an editorial in their December issue Intersec grassed COPEX for further tax evasion and call for Peace News to be allowed in to "see for themselves that it is not a show promoting the arms trade".

COPEX fairs are mostly concerned with internal repression. AB Precision of Poole advertise their Improved Disrupter (Hotrod), Beechwood Equipment market the new SWAT rifle. Body armour, and surveillance systems figure highly. It also seems quite a friendly sort of place, where else would the governments of Iran, Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Mexico mingle happily with a shared interest.

Top of Black Flag's shopping list, from the COPEX skin 2 catalogue, were Tri-fold disposable restraints, "Frisker" search gloves and rapid entry flameproof coveralls and a "Pigstick disruptor".

Peace News 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX (Tel 0171-278 3344)
GreenLine c/o Catalyst Collective, PO Box 5, Lostwithiel, Cornwall

Inspector Barry Norman (left) and Sergeant Andy Brittan (right) - the public face of the recently formed police 'Forward Intelligence Team' ('FIT').

The Police Forward 'Intelligence' Unit

Arising from the near total failure of the Police to control the October '94 Hyde Park demo, the Police have set up the Forward Intelligence Unit. The 12 strong team can now be seen on every sizable action around the country. They aim to build a "rapport" with (key) activists so that people likely to provoke disorder can be identified early in an event.
The aim of this is to split the direct action movement from within. They are relying on people talking to them or simply grassing other activists up.

They have already approached EF!er's in London asking for names of "potential troublemakers". At the Whatley demo they were offering sizable amounts of cash to photographers for their films. Don't get paranoid but get sensible - don't talk to cops, don't take pictures without asking first and if you're arrested on any action say "No comment"!

From: *Earth First Action Update, PO Box 7, Cardiff, CF2 4XX*

Land & Freedom

(or: I Couldn't Afford the Rights to Homage to Catalonia)

I feel sorry for poor old Ken Loach, it must be terrible being a working class hero trying to make a film about the Spanish civil war when the enemy has all the best tunes. Thankfully he can sleep at night 'cos he nicked them. I'm not talking about the fascists, of course, but the anarchists. In fact it would have been impossible to make a film about the POUM without extensively nicking from anarchist heritage because the POUM had none of their own.

So what do we get? Lots of sons of the people trudging over hills in Aragon singing the CNT hymn and other assorted anarchist classics. Look a little closer and you notice that a good few of them (including the main supporting actress, Blanca) are wearing anarchist scarves. Why on earth would any anarchist hang around with the POUM when there are thousands more anarchists on the next hill is beyond me. I've got my suspicions that Ken and his mates put in a lot of anarchist imagery out of a misguided sense of fairness; either that or he's trying to confuse people who don't know about the civil war into thinking that they were all the same group, more or less, and that they were united anti-fascists and anti-Stalinists.

I got into an argument with two marxist acquaintances about the historical accuracy of this film. Their attitude was that a few details here and there don't matter so long as the point gets across. In other words it doesn't matter so long as the nearest to the Trots come across as the true moral guardians and spearhead of the revolution, so bitterly betrayed. Even that disgusting attitude doesn't come across though. I went to see the film with some friends who didn't know anything about the war and they didn't have a clue what was going on. The scene of the May '37 events in Barcelona in particular left anyone without prior knowledge none the

wiser. An ideal opportunity for every trot group in the country to hold a meeting to give us *their* analysis, which they duly did.

Ken Loach is supposedly sympathetic to the anarchists in the film, but no attempt is made to put across their point of view. The problem is not with his depiction of the CNT, but that he chose to focus on a politically irrelevant group, thus enforcing a false depiction of the civil war. During the war and ever since, bourgeois historians have presented us with the story of the Republican government, the International Brigades and the persecution of the POUM.

In Catalonia, where the majority of POUM members were, their role was not numerically important. In fact, they only got places on the militia committees because the CNT wanted to ensure they were represented as a goodwill gesture. You only have to look at the figures, 40,000 POUM against one and a half million CNT.

So there you have it. I enjoyed the film in a "boy's own" kind of way, and Ken is a master of emotional manipulation, so it's best to go along with it and have a good cry if you feel like it. But don't get seduced by the social realism style, treat it as a ripping yarn like "For Whom the Bells Toll" or "Ride a Pale Horse" and you'll be fine. Treat it as a drama documentary, as I'm sure Ken intends, and you're fucked.

CP

Ellis In Wonderland

An Obituary of Ellis Hillman (1928-1996)

Ellis (pictured below while Mayor of Barnet) was that rare bird, a trotskyist with a sense of humour who admitted his contradictions. A Healeyite at fifteen, he was later expelled and became a Labour Party "deep entryist" trot. An atheist who observed Jewish religious practice, a Conway Hall lecturer, professional geologist, Flat Earth Society member, as well as a Bolshevik who pursued civic honours, he was the only one of those distinguished circles who aided our solidarity with Spanish anarchist resistance fighters. Other trots sabotaged our anti-Franco work, but he obtained entry and work permits for those in danger, not without a gentle dig that municipal status sometimes proved useful.

a.m.

Black Flag Readers' Meeting

At the recent Northern Anarchist meeting in Bradford, we had a readers' meeting. Thanks for the support from the groups in Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield, and although it's a bit late for this issue, we have tried to take on board what they suggested. There will be a fuller update in the next issue.

I COULDN'T PAINT GOLDEN ANGELS

Albert Meltzer's Autobiography.
Published by AK Press £12.95. ISBN 1-873176-93-7

I drew the short straw in the collective - reviewing the written life of one of our founders, still active today. Fortunately, he doesn't mention me, playing a minor footnote in the third decade of Black Flag. Albert's enemies will of course expect a "better than sliced bread" review. His friends, hopefully more numerous, would expect the same, albeit for different reasons. So I came to this with an open mind...

Firstly, the everydayness of the story comes across. Albert is being a little modest, perhaps, and at no point in this remarkable life do you get the impression that this isn't something that anyone could have done, given the same circumstances. For Albert, the really amazing characters are the ordinary people he has met through his life, the Billy Campbells, Stuart Christies and Leo Rossers. The Emma Goldmans and Federica Montsenys don't come off so well, but then there were always plenty of academics prepared to write fawning pages over them.

The book is ostensibly an account of a working class life, admittedly with a large number of enforced career changes, but is really the story of Albert's 60 odd years of activism. Its style is the same rambling one that aficionados of his prose enjoy, though as a fellow editor I have to say it works much better as a book. The rambling is both through space and time, partly for stylistic considerations, partly because the police kept on stealing his notebooks. It also deals extensively with the post-Franco resistance and the author's role in supporting it, and his roles in many of the labour battles which have scarred recent British history.

What I did find amazing is the lack of sectarianism. I know Albert's reputation, particularly in relation to the Freedom Press clique. This book details exactly how the resources of the anarchist movement were no longer there when they were needed. This even has depressing parallels now. Freedom bring out a fortnightly liberal pacifist paper posing as anarchist that no one reads. We can just about manage a quarterly - we have far fewer resources and no rich backers. The other anarchist groups in this country can fare no better. Yet we have an upsurge in unofficial industrial action detailed elsewhere in this issue. Think where we could have been with a regular paper? So why is he so soft on them in the book? Regardless, I'm sure they're all bleating about libel down Angel Alley anyway.

The book is well produced, with good illustrations from anarchist illustrator Chris Pig. Don't let the price put you off - it is nearly 400 pages. You can order it direct from AK or via any bookshop. If you can't afford it - order one from your local library.

I look forward to the sequel.

Mike Ward

SACCO & VANZETTI: THE ANARCHIST BACKGROUND- Paul Avrich, 1991, Princeton University Press

reviewed by DM

Avrich's work is important because it places Sacco and Vanzetti within the Italian Anarchist immigrant community in the United States and Mexico around World War 1. It is not about their trial, nor a defence of them as such, but an introduction to the US Italian anarchist movement, and the influence of Luigi Galleani, editor of **Cronaca Sovversiva**. He was a little known but lucid anarchist theorist active at the beginning of this century who wrote "The End of Anarchism?" and advocated propaganda by deed.

The Galleanists, who included Sacco and Vanzetti, believed in, supported and practised violent action for the defence of anarchism and anarchists. Sacco and Vanzetti however remain innocent of the murder of the paymaster and guard at a factory in Massachusetts on the 15th April 1920. For this, despite a lack of evidence, they were *legally* murdered on 23rd August 1927. Judge Webster Thayer said after sentencing ,"Did you see what I did with those anarchistic bastards the other day?"

The book looks closely at the Galleanists' bombing campaign. The US government responded with the "Red" scare and the Patterson raids to this wave of growing radicalism.

Vanzetti made a defiant call for action following the death sentence; "If we have to die for a crime of which we are innocent we ask for revenge in our name and the names of our living and dead." This was answered when their executioner's house was blown up in May 1928. Thayer's house met a similar fate in September 1932. Both survived, but these and other attempts were undoubtedly in sympathy with those who sent a wreath to Sacco and Vanzetti's funeral with the message "*Aspetando l'ora di Vendetta*" - awaiting the hour of vengeance.

Avrich book is concise, clear and accessible, but it is not just a history. It contains a wider look at propaganda by deed and warns of its implications: describing the fate of Valdinoci, Silvero and Eustachio De Chellis, Palumbo and Nanni, all killed by their own bombs and Schiavina, on the run for the next fifty-nine years.

Quote....

"...the future is one of polarisation, a humane acceptance of the bisexual nature of people, against a zealous structure, both repressive and domineering, which involves the concept of distinct differences in gender which are always in opposition.

"Capitalism seems to need this fierce and limited gender stereotyping. So long as capitalism is in control we are stuck with it, unless the feminist and gay liberation movements can change these caricatures of sexual identity. But as crises in the world's ecology and population loom, capitalism must change within the next fifty years or wither away.

"As capitalism also creates and maintains a homophobic society, and as societies in crisis deepen homophobia, there is little hope that that too will wither away in the next few decades. In fact, I see it getting worse."

This is not a book review

In the Autumn of 1995 there was much discussion of and praise for a "radical new approach" to the question of lesbian and gay rights by the liberal press. Unfortunately, "the most important work ever about homosexuality" was not Colin Spencer's "Homosexuality: A History", from the conclusion of which the opening quote is taken, but Andrew Sullivan's "Virtually Normal", extracts from which were published in the Guardian.

I don't fall for the George Woodcock/Freedom Press portrayal of anarchism as simply a more consistent version of liberalism. Liberalism is an individualistic creed based on a hierarchy of "enlightenment" - the liberals' freedom is based on their class privileges, which are "deserved" because of their supposedly superior education and enlightenment, as opposed to the "ignorant" masses whose freedom would result in the tyranny of ignorance, brutality and bad taste.

Ultimately, as the actions of some republican authorities at the outbreak of civil war in Spain in 1936 - denying the workers arms to fight fascism in the face of otherwise certain defeat - illustrates, they are more scared of a social revolution which would destroy their class privileges than they are of fascist ignorance and brutality.

Liberal "freedom" has been exposed by history as a conceit - the mortal enemy of anarchism, which is based on the true freedom of abolition of all hierarchy and privilege, our liberation from the shackles of ignorance and brutality imposed by our "enlightened" rulers. Anarchism is based on federalism rather than individualism, and is about organising a society in which the individual is free to be truly human. Oppression is about denying the humanity of people in varying ways, chiefly through class, but also through race, gender and sexuality, and the imposition of disability.

A movement which seeks real freedom must address and overcome all of these, but all too often anarchists adopt liberal or other ready-made positions without much thought; or apply crude theory to differing oppressions without being informed by the experience of those oppressed in particular ways. To give an example of what I mean, classical anarchism should not be seen as sufficient in itself for addressing the oppression of women, but it should be informed by feminist insights rather than adopting a favoured brand of radical feminism as a quick fix without real thought.

A stick to beat "militant gays"

I read the Independent because I like my liberals openly right wing, so I can see where they're coming from. I'm disturbed by the almost universal loyalty to the Guardian among anarchists and the left - know your enemies before they jail you. So, I got it rammed down my throat that "militant gays" would be better off lobbying politely for the right to marry (doubtless with "male" and "female" roles within the marriage, as every straight moron knows we have), and to patriotically serve our countries like "normal people", than "outing" the closet cases who are among our most vicious oppressors. .

Wasn't it nice of these enlightened people to give us the benefit of their opinions, and to tell us what we have to (not) do to win their approval? Their new found (and short-lived) interest in gay rights had little to do with acceptance of our common humanity, and everything to do with a self-appointed gay voice who shares their class and cultural assumptions.

Andrew Sullivan is the editor of the New Republic, an ex-Kennedy-liberal-turned-Republican magazine, in the United States, and is clearly more at home with fellow Republicans, including the homophobes, than he is with any kind of politicised lesbian and gay consciousness. As a white, middle class male Sullivan enjoys all the privileges afforded someone in his position.

Of course, "normal" is not simply all three of these, but also heterosexual. Sullivan is gay, so he's not what "society" defines as normal, but his argument is that this part of the definition of normality, with access to full citizenship rights, is based on mistaken premises. He is "virtually normal", and his book is dedicated to demolishing the arguments of those of his peers who wish to discriminate against him on the grounds of his sexuality, and to deny him the unqualified bourgeois respectability he craves.

He also has a less convincing swipe at gay liberation. He has no real idea of the radical politics of sexuality and gender which he dismisses, and his ignorance was highlighted in the more critical

quarters of the gay press. For Sullivan and his privileged peers society works, they are "normal", or virtually so, and therefore radical ideas such as subverting the oppressive structures of gender which are woven into the very fabric of society have no appeal to them.

Those of us who are not "normal" - black gay men, lesbians and openly bisexual people, and above all anyone working class - don't have access to privileges, to be free we need social change. While reform, particularly the removal of all officially-sanctioned discrimination, would be welcome because without basic rights more radical agendas are unrealistic, it is not an end in itself. It is, however, what the liberals would want us to settle for, and not challenge the society which delivers their privileges.

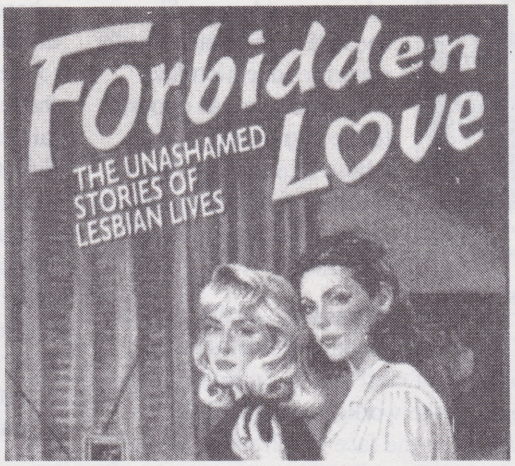
Lavender marriage

Anarchists are against both marriage and the military, of course, so straight ones will see both Sullivan's arguments and the high-profile "Military Four" campaign as irrelevant. These are both political, however, and the issues involved are important to anyone who is not exclusively heterosexual. At the heart of this is the apparatus by which lesbians, gay men and bisexual people are dehumanised by society.

A reformist approach to partnership rights would be to grant them for all unions, based on universally-recognised criteria, not giving married couples privileged access to pension, immigration and communal property rights. One of the most devastating ways lack of social recognition of gay relationships can hit home is when one partner dies and their "kin" take over funeral arrangements, exclude the surviving partner, and turn a coffin into a closet.

Some reform of the privileged status of marriage is on the political agenda from the point of view of heterosexual couples, so campaigners prepared to tackle bigotry (by raising specific issues, not simply pretending we're the same as "normal people") have potential allies, and can take the battle for visibility and human rights out of the ghetto and into the real world. This stands to become the next big thing, I think anarchists should have something to say about the issues.

Marriage by its nature gives privileged status to monogamous heterosexuality, and as an ideal serves to police sexual behaviour, foster guilt among the overwhelming majority who either fail or



don't conform, and generally turn out profit fodder for the capitalists. It is also at the heart of the gender system, being the union of one man and one woman, two complementary halves to make one human pair. The idea of "opposite" sexes which need to pair off in order to balance each other's "innate" characteristics out is as basic to dehumanising and enslaving people as the creation of gods.

Any same-sex union would tend to subvert this, as would "bisexual" unions, regardless of the sex combination, where gender is incidental as opposed to basic. Gay marriage would destroy the institution of marriage as it exists today, it is (unconsciously) a transitional demand - limited but impossible in this society. There is a need for a more radical and honest approach.

Informed by such ideas the old anarchist concept of the free union (the original, real "free love") can gain a new life and radicalism it has lost with the prevalence of "living together" in western societies. There is more to be gained in embracing free unions than the symbolic refusal to recognise the church and the state. Within a reform campaign it could also become a viable option free from second class legal status, which is a real issue, rather than just a life-style accessory for revolutionaries.

Kiss me goodnight, Sergeant Major

The gay issue of the moment is the "right" to serve in the military. Many working class lesbians and gay men get "economically drafted" into the military in "peacetime", and conscripted in wartime, anyway. Choosing the military is somewhat academic, and harassment is merely part of the macho brutalising process. However, the "bad for morale" argument (no better explanation for this than that it upsets bigots has been advanced) helps to institutionalise an irrational fear of lesbians and gay men among straights.

It is still possible for straight men who murder men they claim made sexual advances towards them (however tentative - there are rarely witnesses) to get lighter sentences or manslaughter convictions. The thought of being desired by another man is apparently so disturbing as to justify, or mitigate, murder. The military ban is one of the most basic ways in which the state sanctions such attitudes and behaviour. It also declares to all that lesbians, gay men and bisexual people are second class citizens, and not to be afforded human rights.

Soldiering, like marriage, is a dehumanising concept. The armed forces take men and women, and destroy or circumscribe their capacity for independent thought by standardising haircuts, clothes, behaviour and modes of speech. By these means they are subordinated to the authority of the state, which they will unquestioningly serve, killing because they are told to, not fighting for themselves. The degree of dehumanisation necessary means that gender roles are more exaggerated than civilian society needs, as the need for a non-human identity is stronger.

If people need to fight for something other than the interests the state upholds, they can do it as people, and therefore as themselves, not as cogs in the killing machine. To some extent this has to happen in modern wars where conscription is employed, and propaganda is used to mobilise and motivate people.

We would argue that the only wars worth fighting are for social revolution, and that they can only be fought by the people - armed, mobilised and deployed through revolutionary organisations. For such organisations to work realising people's humanity is crucial, without restrictions on emotional and sexual expression, and without gender roles.

Visible and divisible?

In February's Gay Times, Simon Edge argues that, far from being the creation of gay businessmen, the ghetto is the product and symbol of the gains made by (affluent, white) gay men (and not so much by lesbians) in the quarter century of the post-Stonewall era. Edge sees this, rather than political activism, as being a means of attracting people out of the closet. In noting its intolerance of diversity, however, he fails to draw the obvious conclusion that this in itself leaves the most vulnerable, invisible people who are attracted to their own sex with nothing positive to leave the closet for.

My idea of one circle of hell is a disco full of clones. Lesbians and gay men, let alone bisexual people, are not ethereal creatures existing in a separate world. To quote an old slogan used against the single-issue activism of the Gay Activists' Alliance which succeeded the Gay Liberation Front in the USA in the '70's, "our lives are not divisible". We do have children, our past (and present, and in some cases future) involvements with people of the other sex are not always mistakes or "phases". We are women and working class and black too, sometimes all of these. We are not going to hang these up at the door of the club, any more than we are going to stop being gay when we leave.

Yeah, conventional political protest is of limited usefulness, but so is the ghetto. Try asking the Jews of Europe how well visibility and a vibrant culture and social prominence served them in the '40's. The key area is to be out, proud and ourselves at work, play and in political involvement - which should be an appropriate aspect of everything we do, not just a life-style accessory. Being "normal", or "queer", misses the point. To combat homophobia we have to be real, to combat heterosexism we have to subvert its institutions.

To see a specific form of oppression - based on gender, race, or sexuality - as a single issue is the prerogative of those for whom capitalist society delivers, but who feel unjustly excluded from their full range of privileges or from a fulfilling social life. The left-wing "intelligentsia", minority nationalists, "ladies who lunch", the race relations industry, gay businessmen, et al, sell single-issue politics to working people for whom gender, race, sexuality, etc. is an aspect of their oppression. "*We are your friends - support us instead of the Establishment/ British/ male/ white/ straight world which oppresses you*".

For working people specific forms of oppression do not exist in isolation, however, and can never be a single issue. Sexuality is inextricably linked to race, class and gender oppression (or privilege). Equality with your peers is only useful if you are otherwise "normal", ie privileged. Gay liberation has always been about the links between different aspects of oppression and the totality of the lives of lesbians, gay men and bisexual people. Liberation means changing the society which needs your oppression to maintain itself - I am working class and bisexual, and I want to be free, therefore I am an anarchist.

....Unquote

By contrast with Sullivan, Colin Spencer, who shares his viewpoint that same-sex affections and behaviour are unremarkable, takes the premise that it is not these that need to be explained - they just exist, and have always done - but societies' attitudes towards them.

So, his very personal perspective takes the form of an anglo-centric history of imposed sexual moralities clashing with human sexual behaviour. He does attempt to link the rise of capitalism with the rise of the modern homophobic society we live in (although he does not treat capitalism as the start of history as a marxist might; he starts with pre-history, and prehuman times!), but his analysis of the developing ideology of British capitalism and its need for a homophobic component is not particularly sharp.

And there's the rub, at 400 pages of text the book is neither an exhaustive history (it is anglo-centric, but draws on other societies as they affect English culture in this respect), nor a disciplined analysis. Very readable, and with a remarkable sweep to it, it is an enjoyable book, but not a satisfying one. It also scores points for honesty in acknowledging that the history of Homosexuality (ie same-sex love) is largely the history of Bisexuality. I'd recommend it to anyone who is interested in people as they really are, but someone needs to write a proper theoretical analysis of the relationship between heterosexism, gender and oppression in capitalist society. Any takers?

Peter Principle

Lenin was right, the anarchists were wrong. We admit it! Didn't Dad Vlad say the Marxist State would wither away? All we could say was that in Russia only its opponents withered away. Look at Russia now. The Marxist State did wither away in the end, didn't it?

In a Marxist State, if you've no living relations and don't leave a will, your possessions go to the Communist Party. Your feelings on the matter, as interpreted and proven by your friends, are ignored. This was true in the Soviet Union,and continues in the Labour-run London Borough of Camden. When our friend James Alexander was murdered in his council flat, he had very recently come into money. Until then he had thought it pointless to make a will. Within weeks he was murdered. It took two years to get the body released for burial, and a further three months to get the police to release part-payment for his funeral.

As he was in a sheltered flat, the council reckons it was legally entitled to grab the other portable assets, including books and the manuscript for a book detailing Stalinist intrigues in British socialism.

Pamela Lockley, Asst Director of Housing, states in a letter that those named by Alex as acting next-of-kin or their nominees have no legal rights to anything. Under the Local Governmernt Act the Council can dispose of property 'in an appropriate way' . This was to give them to the Marx Memorial Library (the Stalinist rump of the old CP) as they had 'expressed an interest' (after reading an interview with me in the local paper). They 'are a legal organisation ...there was no reason why the Council could not let them take any books they felt would be of use." This shameless bias and lack of sensitivity means anti-fascist council tenants in the same situation should note with a shiver some bureaucrat might decide an 'appropriate way' to dispose of their papers on their deaths would be to hand them to a legal organisation, like the BNP, if it expressed an interest.

(The opening paragraph was intended for a collection of comments on Alex's book. I doubt if the appropriate legal owners of his forever-to-be-unpublished work will want it).

Full Sutton Prisoners Strike

On November 13th, 1995, prisoners at the high security dispersal prison Full Sutton went on a work strike. It's hard to get accurate information about numbers but one estimate reckons on 250 cons refusing to work. This is a massive show of strength for any prison, but especially for Full Sutton where the authorities have traditionally been quick to crush resistance.

Four of the six wings (i.e. all except those for sex offenders) participated in the strike which started in E-Wing and lasted for 3 days. It was ended by the authorities sending in the MUFTI squad, screws tooled up in riot gear, to break it up. This resulted in some clashes with cons, labelled a "riot" by the press where it was mentioned at all. The protest came after a series of restrictions placed on cons over the previous months and was sparked by a new "Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme" introduced at the start of November.

The instruction to governors setting out the incentives scheme is full of jargon and buzzwords like "incentive-based accommodation units". But it is clear form reading it that the scheme is aimed at increasing the pressure to conform. It adds another level of control in prisons, to the Prison Rules and to Governors' discretionary powers. These already allow for prisoners to be punished for virtually anything, at the whim of a screw and with the inevitable agreement of their superiors. The scheme tries to pretend that it's not about more punishment: "The loss of an earned privilege ...should be seen as a normal consequence of a general deterioration in behaviour and/or performance. It should not be associated with guilt or punishment." Prisoners just aren't convinced!

The scheme makes things previously regarded as rights, specifically visits, access to private cash, association time, wearing your own clothes and home leave into privileges to be earned. Prisoners lose access to these for "acting uncooperatively" or gain more if they play the game the prison's way. To restrict prisoners' contact with family and friends is a blow, and to put prisoners on different levels of pay is intended to create divisions and tension.

But the Full Sutton prisoners are clearly not daft. They could see that to take away what little they had and to make them grovel to get a bit back, is to take the piss. They stuck together and more power to them. One of the lessons of the 1990 Strangeways Revolt is that if prisoners stick together and fight back they can at least win some concessions out of the system.

They are faced with the reversal of some of the positive changes introduced since the 1990 uprisings. The aim is to reduce prisoners' rights, isolate them and reduce the chance of collective action. As the Full Sutton strike has shown, if you push people enough they'll do exactly what you don't want them to, fight back.

The following is an edited account from someone who was there.

A Burning Sense of Injustice

On Wednesday 15th November a serious altercation took place on this wing, in which at least four people were injured after a peaceful demonstration became confrontational & MUFTI and some inmates were involved in violent clashes. In recent months there have been a number of oppressive measures which have left many inmates with a burning sense of injustice due to the sheer one sided nature in which they have been implemented. This has culminated in the prisoners here taking strike action which led directly to the incident here on E-Wing.

At present the whole prison remains in a state of tension and fear that further trouble may ensue. I have to live here and I can assure you that being in a calm environment with some privileges and rights is still a severe hardship, to have to live in an atmosphere that has in recent months bred hatred and animosity among so many people just seems barbaric and has a detrimental affect on both inmates and staff. There is not a prisoner left in this jail who in under any illusion that they are here FOR punishment and not AS a punishment.

Tow separate issues have caused much ill feeling as they have taken away basic human rights. They relate to an appellants right to phone their solicitor, and proposals recently introduced make contacts with one's family a privilege to be earned with some prisoners getting more visits than others.

I recently complained about the removal of phonecall facilities for appellants, which is now at the sole discretion of a prison officer to decide, often with inmates with appeals pending being told to write letters, which the authorities then sit on. Since my complaint I have had to use the pay-phone, at the expense of contact with my family.

The new pay system that is in operation has caused enormous feelings of resentment. It is a divisive means of trying to ensure that the prison runs smoothly and was a major factor in both the protest and disturbance. The onus is now so much on punishment it seems a major step backwards in terms of trying to make this prison a positive and calm environment.

"AA"

Source: **Taking Liberties, (London ABC) 121 Railton Road, London SE24 0LR**

Recent Spanish History

I was chatting with a bloke who had been involved with CND in the sixties the other day. He told me about the big marches they organised and said they had a group of Spanish anarchists who came over on a visit. There was, apparently, some disruption of the march by British anarchists. He said the Spanish anarchist contingent approached the organisers, explained they didn't like the British anarchists, and said would it be OK if they beat them up. I understand this request was rejected.

Tony B

Comment: Bollocks! (a) When Franco was in power, coming over on a protest trip would have meant returning to a minimum five years jail for illegal association, which in itself would have discouraged any "Spanish anarchist contingent" (b) official CND, led by Peggy Duff and Canon Collins, aimed at respectable figures like Bertrand Russell and Michael Foot. It insisted any provocation should be met with silent non-violent resistance, and their stewards collaborated with the police against anarchists who felt otherwise and so 'disrupted' peaceful protest. Hard to see what offended anarchists from Spain (especially as the British police were known to pass information to their colleagues abroad) (c) The bit about asking permission to commit violence ties in with the usual thick-Spanish-anarchist stories (for parallels, take the anti-Irish anecdotes).
For a chronological record of Anglo-Spanish anarchist collaboration in this period, see Albert Meltzer's autobiography.

Land and Freedom

As fiction but hardly as factual background I liked the Ken Loach film Land and Freedom (an Anarchist slogan), with Anarchist songs and units. But all was disguised as the POUM. Though it was a scapegoat for the Stalinists, it was not the major factor in resisting them, never mind Franco. The Anarchists disappear from the film except as invisible 'allies' who should have got together with them .
Perhaps Loach had to concentrate on the POUM to bring in his English volunteer and his own Trotskyist sympathies. Unlike the POUM, the trots did not even support the workers' struggles at the time. Next film by Ken, I understand, will be about a Liverpool sailor who happened to be in port when the Kronstadt Mutiny was led by that rebel salt Leon Trotsky.

Dave T.

Maori Protest

It was good to see the photo of the occupation of Moutua Gardens in No.206. The Maori occupiers now call the gardens Pakaitore Marae, its original name 150 years ago. The anarchists in Wellington visited the Marae with food and stuff several times during the occupation and have stayed in touch.
The Queen is here with the CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government, or Cheap Holidays on Government Money). People are being locked up for protesting before it's even started and one of the leaders of the Pakaitore occupation got three weeks prison for contempt of court. He was there supporting a friend and said a Maori prayer without the judge's permission!

Mark , Christchurch, NZ

John Perrotti

Just a quick note to pass on some good news. John Perotti, who has filed 56 federal and state civil right suits since being sent to prison for 45 years, has had one more victory against the US government. He won $10,200 in an action against prison officials. It was awarded by a Cincinnati jury for violation of his rights by physical retaliation for writing about prison conditions for outside publications and for filing law suits. A further violation of US civil rights was the withholding of publications, for which he was awarded a further $200. John has previously won $2000 for being handcuffed and then beaten and dragged downstairs, his head bouncing on every step. He refuses to be silenced by years of incarceration or by intimidation.
The downside is that the State have appealed and meanwhile the money won't reach John, but it's a morale boost all the same.
After his 79 day hungerstrike his health is recovering slowly, but there may be permanent damage to his kidneys.

AF, John Perotti Defence Fund

Comment: Defence of even elementary civil rights (such as receiving publications) are impossible in less democratic countries such as Britain. Even here it is possible to find loopholes through which a lone prisoner can go on fighting until one can get mass resistance. Reform of prison conditions will not come through prison reformers. It will come through those fighting for the abolition of prisons, like John Perotti, who meanwhile refuse to be ground down.

Send him a word of solidarity: John Perotti, POB 45699, #167712, Lucasville, Ohio 45699 USA

IN MEMORIAM

The Black Flag Collective, former members of DAM and current members of the Solidarity Federation, would like to express their sincere sympathy to Malcolm and his daughter Daisy on their sudden and terrible loss. Our thoughts and hearts are with them at this time and we offer them any Solidarity possible .
SALUD !

IN THE FRAME IN ITALY

November saw the second trial of four comrades accused of armed robbery in Italy (see last Back Flag). What emerged was not only the state frame-up of the four anarchists but an attempt to criminalise solidarity from comrades across Italy:

Jean Weir, one of the accused, writes of the trial, "As is common knowledge, the trial was set up from the start. But, as time went on, it was becoming evident that there was no concrete evidence against any of the accused and things seemed to be slipping from their control. So in November the judges welcomed the timely appearance on the scene of a collaborator who set out to eliminate any doubts in the matter by accusing herself of having carried out one of the robberies, naming another four well known for their activity in the anarchist movement and who have been extremely active in demonstrating solidarity to imprisoned anarchists.

Anomalous even in the infamous and widespread phenomenon of "pentiti"[1] in Italy, which was used to dismantle the armed organisations in the seventies and now a prime instrument in the states spectacular "struggle against the mafia", the self accuser in this case has nothing to repent, being quite unknown to anarchists and never having taken part in any initiatives of the anarchist movement."

This is a young woman who is being leant on by the cops and a Judge, Antonio Marini in Rome. The same Marini had been given the task of investigating the many Italians who swell the number of desparecidos in Argentina, reached an agreement with the generals and closed the case.

The final episode of the trial, which took place on January 31st was an event in itself. Nearly 100 anarchists were present, between the public gallery, the corridor and outside in the street. At one point the trial was interrupted. Police charged those in the corridor, beating them with truncheons. After reading out declarations condemning the trial as frame up and farce, the four were sentenced to 6 years and millions of lire fines. A letter was also read out from a Greek journalist who had uncovered a plot orchestrated by Marini to have anarchists criminalised and arrested.

It should be said at this point that, in contrast to the increasing number of anarchists who are demonstrating their rage and solidarity in a myriad of ways, the official anarchist movement in Italy has totally ignored a frame up which, being addressed against anarchists at a spectacular level, as well as the immediate or imminent acts of repression, also attacks them. Not a word printed in the organ of the Italian Anarchist Federation, Umanita Nova or the review of the "cultural" anarchists, Rivista A. It is better to talk about repression at a safe distance, for instance in Greece.

There has been solidarity from anarchists all over Italy. This has been used as a pretext for a second wave of raids directed by Marini on November 16th up and down the country. Homes and centres were raided in Naples, Rome, Florence, Rovereto, Pinerolo, Pisa, Turin, Catania, Milan, Palermo, Pescarta, and in many other places.

Tuscan Anarchists write "It's all very well to demonstrate solidarity with innocent people who proclaim their innocent but not with the guilty to claim their "guilt". Especially when the "guilty" in question do not have saints in paradise, not being Mafia bosses, hunch-backed Christian democrats, flabby socialists or impetuous policemen, but are simply individuals with neither god nor law, apart from their own desires."
Roveretan Anarchists write " Guilty of solidarity, this is the sentence that has been pronounced. A simple crime of just one word. A crime we will never tire of committing."

1)"Repentant" prisoners who gave evidence against former comrades and apologised for their "crimes" in exchange for release from prison.

Anarcho-quiz

1. What two legends originating in the novels of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) stamped their mark, one temporarily on the British middle class, the other seemingly forever on the world ?

2. Over the world's history, kings have been beheaded by new rulers, assassinated by their subjects, driven into exile by war or revolution, shot, forced into abdication or exile, poisoned, drugged imprisoned, blinded, or murdered by ministers or relatives, blown up or drowned. In 1327 Edward II of England reputedly had a red hot poker stuck up his arse. But what economical method of getting rid of a king is so far unique to Scotland ?

3. Some regard it as a newspaper hoax, others as an unexplained scientific phenomenon, but what is the Loch Ness monster really ?

4. Anarcho-Syndicalists round the world sent delegates to the proposed Red International of Labour Unions following the second Communist International congress in Moscow. All but one (the renegade was a young worker from Clydeside) were disillusioned with what they saw in Bolshevik Russia and withdrew. What happened to the odd man out to make him change sides and what was his fate ?

5. After what disaster did Scotland come effectively under English rule ?

Answers on page 11